3 1761 05335232 4


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/johnmiltonpatrio00hooduoft

JOHN MILTON:

THE PATRIOT AND POET.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE MODEL MAN.

BY

EDWIN PAXTON HOOD,

AUTHOR OF "OLD ENGLAND," "GENIUS AND INDUSTRY," "SELF-EDUCATION," ETC.

LONDON:

PARTRIDGE & OAKEY, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLII.

PR
3581
H6



PREFACE.

To present to the young men of England a compendious Digest of the Life, Writings, and Character of the noblest and sublimest of their countrymen, is the object of the Editor of this volume.

No book upon this illustrious man has appeared hitherto so condensed, yet so full and various as this; the true opinions of England's greatest son are presented, without the veilings and trammellings of sectarianism; and it has been compiled under the feeling that this hoary and blind old Man of God, should be the darling, the Eikon Basilike of all young men.

Love and reverence might have expanded the volume to a heavier bulk and price; but in this case, the main intention of the Compiler would have been defeated, which was to furnish as good a copy of the venerable portrait as he could, for the sum of one shilling and sixpence.

E. P. H.

Fulford, York.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
First Efforts of a Great Life	13
Horton, Buckinghamshire	26
Milton Travelling	41
The Times	51
Marriage and Divorce	70
The Idea of "Comus."	83
Milton on Education	93
The Areopagitica	102
Eikonoclastes	124
Milton and Salmasius	130
The Sonnets of Milton	137
Milton and Johnson	145
Milton's Satan	154
Paradise Lost	185
Paradise Regained	195
Milton's Ecclesiastical Polity	201
Milton a Republican	212
Milton and Popery	218
Parting Glimpses of Great Life	223

JOHN MILTON.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST EFFORTS OF A GREAT LIFE.

How little is known of the personal histories of the Fathers of English Poetry! Rude outlines, alone, are preserved to us of the biographies of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Of the men whose writings exercise most influence over our minds, only two or three doubtful anecdotes, and questionable notes, have been ascertained; while those whose talents were perverted to destroy their fellows, or whose lives were frittered away in a round of petty pursuits, not worth the name of occupations, are drawn at full length—their witless words all carefully jotted down, and their objectless movements

described with ridiculous minuteness. The sayings and doings of the illustrious patriarchs of genius are altogether unknown. What would we give for some account of the everyday life of Chaucer, at Donnington Castle? or of Spenser, at Mulla? How precious to us would be a genuine picture of a night at the "Mermaid," with all the real words that Shakspeare said!—for men like these become dear to us; we are not satisfied with what they have written for us; we long to draw near to them, and to hear them speak, and to see what was the real life they led. But no! Of these men we can know little more than nothing: their times are almost inarticulate about them: and, failing these, we must content ourselves with such ware as the "Life of Beau Brummell," in two bulky volumes; or, "Pepy's Diary," in four: and, certainly, what we lacked in information touching the notes of the swan, is abundantly made up in ample details respecting the cackling of the goose.

Of John Milton, a name synonymous with the highest sublimity which inspired humanity has reached, we know little more than what is known of his illustrious predecessors. Of incidents we have scarcely any. The lives of such men are supposed,—perhaps correctly,—to be

wanting in incident. Their most important days present to the world nothing very extraordinary. Yet Milton travelled much (for one in his day,) in his youth; lived in the most stirring times England has ever known; and himself was in daily intercourse with those who touched the mainsprings of the popular movement. So prone are we to mourn over the impossible and unattainable, that we must needs regret that we have not an account of what this man did, and thought, and saw.

John Milton was born on the 9th of December, 1608, in the parish of All-hallows, Bread-street, London. He was the son of John Milton, a scrivener or writer. At that time publicans were not the only persons who erected signs; and it was at the sign of the "Spread Eagle" that Milton first opened his eyes to the light. This was the crest of the family. The father of our poet was a man of refined and elegant taste, and was characterised, too, by that inflexible adherence to the rights of conscience, which shone forth with such dignity in his son. He had received his education at Christ Church, Oxford, where it seems probable he imbibed a hearty attachment to the principles of the Reformation; but his father was a bigoted Papist, an under ranger or keeper

of the Forest of Shotover, near Horton, in Oxfordshire, and he disinherited his son. His son held fast his faith, adopting the extreme Protestant views of the Puritans. He chose the somewhat mean profession of a scrivener, but retained his polite tastes and tendencies. He was successful in business, and retired at last upon an independency, to Forest Hill, in Buckinghamshire. All the biographers notice his distinguished attainments in music.

To what matter is it that we inquire at all into ancestry. It was said, the Miltons in ancient times were distinguished for their opulence, but lost all, taking the unfortunate side in the battles of the Roses. Evidence seems clear that the mother of our John Milton was named Caston, derived, so says Sir Egerton Bridges, "according to the best authority, from a Welch family." The curious may notice thus the blending of the Saxon and Celtic races in the poet's person, and the production of that cast of character often noticed from the combination. When the poet was born, his father had passed the middle age of life. Milton's name cannot be cited as illustrating the early dullness of genius; all the accounts we have of his boyhood confirm any impression we might previously have formed of the precocity of his powers. His

genius manifested itself very early in the various departments of poetry and scholarship. Mardhof says, "that Milton's writings show him to have been a man from his childhood; his poems are exceedingly above the ordinary capacity of that age." His first tutors were Thomas Young, and afterwards Dr. Alexander Gill. The estimation in which he afterwards held these masters may be gathered from his affectionate letters to them. From the same source we may gather their judgment of him; but his diligence soon outstripped the care and zeal of his instructors. He was initiated into several tongues; he tasted the pages of philosophy: so great was his thirst for learning, that after he was twelve years of age he seldom went to bed until past midnight. At the age of fifteen he was sent to Christ College, in Cambridge, there to prosecute yet more solid studies. Here he continued for seven years. He took his degree of M.A. at the age of twenty. To his old master, Dr. Gill, he writes not a very laudatory account of the congenial companionship of his college.

"Among us, as far as I know, there are only two or three, who without any acquaintance with criticism or philosophy, do

not instantly engage with raw and untutored judgments in the study of theology; and of this they acquire only a slender smattering, not more than sufficient to enable them to patch together a sermon, with scraps pilfered, with little discrimination, from this author and from that. Hence I fear lest our clergy should relapse into the sacerdotal ignorance of a former age. Since I find so few associates in study here, I should instantly direct my steps to London, if I had not determined to spend the summer vacation in the depths of literary solitude, and, as it were, hide myself in the chamber of the Muses. As you do this every day, it would be injustice in me any longer to divert your attention or engross your time. Adieu.

"Cambridge, July 2, 1628."

Here should be noticed the first efforts of Milton's muse, his college poetry, which is of the very highest order. His Latin poems, written about the age of nineteen and twenty-one, "may be justly considered," says Warton, "as legitimate, classical composition, but the majesty of his odes is very great, witness the sublime lines 'AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.' We need

not to be told how great a power harmony had over his senses and his imagination."

"Blest pair of sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mix'd pow'r employ,
Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce,
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure consent,
Ay sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne,
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,
Where the bright seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud up-lifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host, in thousand choirs,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,—
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly ;
That we on earth with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise,
As once we did, till disproportion'd Sin
Jarr'd against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood,
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial concert us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light!"

The sonnet, on his being arrived at the age

of three-and-twenty years, shows to us how seriously he began to look upon life,—upon his own life,—upon the shaping forth of his own duties and his character.

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom sheweth.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
Than some more timely-happy spirits indueth.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye."

But that poem which principally at this period, the college era of his life, ennobles his name and memory, is his "Hymn on the Nativity." It meets Milton's own definition of a poem; it is simple, sensuous, and passionate; grandeur and magnificence break forth in every line. Scholarship, too, the evidences of a mind embued with not only the great names and events of ancient story, but with the more gloomy pomp and mysterious light from Gothic superstitions. This poem has engaged the

encomiums of every succeeding critic and biographer, except Johnson, who passes it by in sullen silence, apparently because it was not possible to condemn, and his pen was too jealous to give unqualified praise. In this sublime but youthful effort the poet is caught up to the highest flights of frenzy—words never in the whole history of language more accurately and vividly bodied forth the most exalted conceptions. The music of the stanza is perfect, too, and the last line of each verse "the Alexandrinian close, is like the swelling of the wind when the blaze rises to the height." It sounds like the climax of the thought; we feel it rushing through the soul; now it sobs, and now it soars,—expressing either tenderness or terror, mysterious awe, or haughty majesty. Thus the prevalence of peace throughout the world at our Lord's nativity is alluded to.

"No war or battle sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high up hung:
The hooked chariot stood,
Unstain'd with hostile blood:
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still, with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of light,
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds with wonder whist
Smoothly the waters kiss'd,
Whisp'ring new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,—
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The streaming of the celestial music through the ranks of the "amazed stars," and the ears of the entranced shepherds, while all the symbols of Paganism feel the thrill through temple and shrine—the cessation of the oracles at the birth of Christ is the most powerful portion of the poem. The verses have been repeatedly quoted, and every lover of Milton will know this well; but they may be cited again, as illustrations of the power of the imagination to embody forth in words the most lofty ideas.

"The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,

A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar pow'r foregoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baalim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-batter'd God of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heav'n's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shrine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

And sullen Moloch fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring,
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
 Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud:
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest,
 Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud.
In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark.

But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest,—
 Time is our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven's youngest teemed star
Hath fix'd her polish'd car,
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnest angels sit in order serviceable."

It is not necessary to point the reader's attention to those lines, most vividly descriptive and powerful. Some are magical: the reader seems, while he reads, to be translated to the dreadful scenery of some of the ancient mysteries. In silence and darkness, save from the livid lustre of the blue fitful flame, the rites of Isis or Ceres are performed before the reader's eye. He figures to himself the vast, dread, and dim space—the clash of cymbals breaking the stillness—the low mutterings of distant priests—the flit of the stole—the roar of pent-up winds or flames—and the spell-bound asto-

nishment of all at the cessation of the mystic profanity. Is not all this before the eye when Moloch's priests move

"In dismal dance about the furnace blue?"

or when the poet describes the flight of Osiris:

"In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark,
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark."

We have lingered thus long on this ode, though it is comparatively brief, because it is the noblest promise in our author's youth, of "Paradise Lost." But, though written in his youth, the poem breathes the deep-toned solemnity of most earnest thought. In its grand cadences it reminds us of Milton's favourite instrument, the organ. The words surge to and fro, with wonderful propriety and harmony. But enough—all encomium is tame to the deserts of so great a piece of genius.

CHAPTER II.

HORTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

Cambridge must have presented to the eye and mind of the poet a very flat appearance. Within the last few years it has been made to put on the garb of prettiness, and many of the walks upon the banks of the Cam wear the appearance of still, retired life; but in the time when Milton studied, there was really nothing to rouse and inspire the intellect. The remove, therefore, to Horton-in-Colebrook, Buckinghamshire, must have been very grateful. There he resided five years, beneath the roof of his father, who had quitted business, and had purchased an estate in this neighbourhood. Here he read over all the Greek and Latin authors, especially the historians; and here he is believed to have written his Arcades, Comus and Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas. This pleasant retreat excited his

most poetic feelings; and all the poems written during this period show a most delighted appreciation of the charms of English scenery. The Countess Dowager of Derby resided near Horton, and the Arcades was performed by her grandchildren, residing at this seat, called Herefield Place. "It seems to me," says Todd, "that Milton intended a compliment to his fair neighbour (for fair she was) in his L'Allegro.

> "Towers and battlements it sees,
> Bosomed high in tufted trees,
> Where perhaps some beauty lies,
> The cynosure of neighbouring eyes."

The two odes, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, are finely descriptive of English scenery, and may be ever read, learned, recalled. They are not marked by any Miltonic grandeur or sublimity; on the contrary, they are exquisitely simple; but the grouping of natural objects and images is most complete; there is more of description than of imagination,—and the mind of the reader is instantly borne away to the retired and solitary beauty of the country life in the times of Elizabeth or the Stuarts. They give, immediately upon their perusal, a contradiction to Johnson's criticism, that "Milton

never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness; he was a lion that had no skill in dangling a kid." Most of his shorter poems are eminently graceful; and the two to which we are now making reference excel in this attribute. The object of the poem is to show how the mind colours all things, how prompt it is to select those objects which most flatter its particular state—to both the melancholy or contemplative man Il Penseroso, and to the mirthful or active man L'Allegro. The same fields, the same world spreads itself,—but the different minds seize on different times, different spots, and associate with even the same places widely different ideas;—they are a sort of commentary on the well-known lines of Shakspeare.

> "Oh how this spring of love resembleth
> Th' uncertain glory of an April day,
> Which now shows all her beauty to the sun,
> And by-and-bye a cloud takes all away."

The cheerful man rises with the lark in the morning, and steps forth into the fields. The sun is just beginning his stately march; the cocks are crowing, as if to scatter the remaining mists of darkness; human employments and

labours are now beginning; the shepherd counts his sheep, under the old hawthorn in the dell, to see if any have strayed during the night; the milkmaid comes abroad with her pails, and the mower whets his scythe in the hayfield; while over the hills is heard the cheerful echo of the huntsmen's horns and hounds,—these are the delights of the cheerful man—

"To hear the lark begin his flight
And singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow;
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landscape round it measures
Russet lawns and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied;
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide:
Towers and battlements it sees,
'Bosom'd high in tufted trees,

Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes."

What a picture is presented in the following stanzas :—

" Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their savoury dinner set,
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tann'd haycock in the mead."

The cheerful man continues his walk through the day; he delights to hear the peal of the merry bells, of the jocund rebeck on the village green; he delights to watch the village youth dancing beneath the shade, when the young and the old come forth to make the blithe holiday; he delights to see the spicy nut-brown ale circling round the board, to hear the stories told of the strange feats of fairies, and the wonderful doings, especially of that ancient frolicsome elf, Robin Goodfellow; he listens to these tales, till frighted all creep to their beds, and are lulled to sleep by the whistling winds.

The cheerful man delights in the life of cities, in the busy hum of men, in the throng of courts, where knights and barons mingle in the gentle contentions of peace; the gay scenery of the masque pleases him; the pomp, and feast, and ancient pageantry; he does not altogether scorn the theatre, if "Jonson's learned sock be on," or "sweetest Shakspeare"

> "Warble his native wood-notes wild."

The cheerful man delights in music, in "soft Lydian airs"—

> "In notes, with many a winding bout
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
> With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
> The melting voice through mazes running,
> Untwisting all the chains that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony."

All the elements of this exquisite cheerfulness, it should be noticed, are derived from virtuous enjoyments. Cowley, or any of the other poets of that age, would have given very different colours to the merry men of their fancy; but there is a dignity and propriety in every source of enjoyment, in the

> "Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
> And Laughter holding both his sides;"

while the peculiar inspiration of the poet appears in his freedom and his purity—

> "And in thy right hand lead with thee
> The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty,
> And if I give thee honour due,
> Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
> To live with her, and live with thee,
> In unreproved pleasures free."

The contemplative man goes forth not in the morning; but in the evening he sits upon some rising plot of ground, and hears the solemn curfew.

> "Over some wide-watered shore,
> Swinging slow, with sullen roar."

He finds a charm in retired leisure, and listens with pleasure to the nightingale—most musical, most melancholy. The midnight hour is the chosen time of the musing man: he walks unseen on the smooth-shaven lawn, beneath the beams of the moon; or, if the night will not permit, he chooses some retired room, where glowing embers cast a gloom over the floor, while the cricket chirps upon the hearth—while the watchman drowsily chaunts forth the hour: the musing man is fond of the mysterious study,—and high up in the lonely tower you

may see his lamp, outwatching the Bear, or exploring the dim regions of the spiritual world, or the dim mazes of alchemical study; or, if he betake himself to the enchantments of literature, "gorgeous Tragedy, in her sceptred pall," presents the high achievements of Thebes or Troy, or the forests and enchantments of Gothic story. Thus through the night, and until the sober-tinted morn appears, the musing man dreams his time away. Yet, even in the bright day time, he will find Nature to his humour; amidst piping winds, and rustling leaves, and showers, Nature responds to the mood of his spirit; or, if the sun flings his flaring beams, then to the arched walks and twilight groves of the ancient monumental oak in the retired solitudes haunted by sylvan shadows, where never was heard the stroke of the rude axe, and nymphs, in their hallowed coverts of the brooks, were never disturbed by the eye of the profane, —there would the musing man go, accompanied during the day only by the bee singing among the flowers, or the waters murmuring in concert,—so waving over the spirit some mysterious dream, sent with sweet music breathing above—about—beneath, by the unseen genius of the wood.

The cheerful man loves music,—so also does

the melancholy man, but of a very different order; the solemn sounds that murmur through old abbeys; not the rebeck, but the organ; not the merry sounds of the cheerful dancers, but the solemn choristers in the old and vast cathedral.

"But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstacies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that Heav'n doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live."

Dr. Johnson calls these pieces "two noble efforts of the imagination." Almost every line

is a picture; and by ordinary readers they will perhaps be more readily perused than the more august and exalted strains of the poet. They are both portraits of temperaments entirely individual; they are "silent, solitary inhabitants of the breast; they neither receive nor transmit communication: no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle."*

Mr. Todd quotes a fine letter from that accomplished scholar, Sir William Jones, to Lady Spenser, dated Oxford, September 7th, 1769. It seems from it, that it was his opinion that we are indebted, not to Horton, but to Forest Hill, for his descriptive pictures of the country. It was written during the celebrated Garrick Jubilee, in honour of Shakspeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon, and is interesting for many reasons: we will therefore cite it here.

"The necessary trouble of correcting the first printed sheets of my history, prevented me to-day from paying a proper respect to the memory of Shakspeare, by attending his jubilee.

* Johnson's Life of Milton, Lives of Poets.

But I was resolved to do all the honour in my power to so great a poet; and set out in the morning, in company with a friend, to visit a place where Milton spent some part of his life, *and where, in all probability, he had composed some of his earliest productions.* It is a small village on a pleasant hill, about three miles from Oxford, called Forest Hill, because it formerly lay contiguous to a forest, which has since been cut down. The poet chose this place of retirement after his first marriage, and he describes the beauties of his retreat in that fine passage of his L'Allegro:—

> "'Sometimes walking, not unseen,
> By hedge-row elms, or hillocks green,—
> While the ploughman, near at hand,
> Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
> And the milk-maid singeth blithe,
> And the mower whets his scythe.
> And every shepherd tells his tale
> Under the hawthorn in the dale.'

"It was neither the proper season of the year, nor time of the day, to hear all the rural sounds, and see all the objects mentioned in this description; but, by a pleasing concurrence of circumstances, we were saluted, on our approach to the village, with the music of the mower and his scythe: we saw the ploughman

intent upon his labour, and the milk-maid returning from her country employment.

"As we ascended the hill, the variety of beautiful objects, the agreeable stillness and natural simplicity of the whole scene, gave us the highest pleasure. We at length reached the spot *whence Milton undoubtedly took most of his images;* it is on the top of the hill, from which there is a most extensive prospect on all sides: the distant mountains that seemed to support the clouds, the villages and turrets, partly shaded with trees of the finest verdure, and partly raised above the groves that surrounded them, the dark plains and meadows of a greyish colour, where the sheep were feeding at large; in short, the view of the streams and rivers convinced us that there was not a single useless or idle word in the above-mentioned description; but that it was a most exact and lively representation of nature. Thus will this fine passage, which has always been admired for its elegance, receive an additional beauty from its exactness. After we had walked, with a kind of poetical enthusiasm, over this enchanted ground, we returned to the village.

"The poet's house was close to the church; the greatest part of it has been pulled down; and what remains belongs to an adjacent farm.

I am informed that several papers, in Milton's own hand, were found by the gentleman who was last in possession of the estate. The tradition of his having lived there is current among the villagers: one of them shewed us a ruinous wall that made part of the chamber. I was much pleased with another, who had forgotten the name of Milton, but recollected him by the title of 'The Poet.'

"It must not be omitted that the groves near this village are famous for nightingales, which are so elegantly described in the Penseroso.—Most of the cottage windows are overgrown with sweet-briers, vines, and honey-suckles; and that Milton's habitation had the same rustic ornament, we may conclude from the description of the lark bidding him 'good-morrow'—

> "'Thro' the sweet-brier, or the vine,
> Or the twisted eglantine;'

for it is evident he meant a sort of honeysuckle by the eglantine, though that word is commonly used for the sweet-brier, which he could not mention twice in the same couplet.

"If ever I pass a month or six weeks at Oxford, in the summer, I shall be inclined to hire

and repair this venerable mansion, and to make a festival for a circle of friends, in honour of Milton, the most perfect scholar, as well as the sublimest poet, that our country ever produced. Such an honour will be less splendid, but more sincere and respectful, than all the pomp and ceremony on the banks of the Avon.

"I have the honour," &c,

That Milton did not live in the house mentioned by Sir William Jones there seems little reason to doubt, but at a far later period in life than the composition of L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso, there is a tradition most general, that he did reside in "this beautiful and beautifully described village of Forest Hill." Madame du Bocage, in her entertaining "Letters concerning England," relates, that visiting England in June, 1750, Baron Schutz, and lady, at their house Shotover Hill, "they showed me from a small eminence, *Milton's House*, to which I bowed, with all the reverence with which that poet's memory inspires me." Milton undoubtedly resided at Forest Hill, but when, cannot be ascertained; but the scenery individualized in the Allegro and Penseroso, is peculiarly English, especially the England of the Midland, or the Southern Counties: and

Milton may have seen the same in many places although he may have introduced into the poem some slight characteristic traits like those to which we have alluded. Horton, then, it seems, has the honour of being the scene where he formed and moulded his mind, he filled his understanding with images from the best authors of antiquity, and reflections upon Nature and Life; he employed his pen upon the first buddings forth of power: his mind was more enamoured in those days with the forms of beauty than of sublimity; imagination was rich within him, highly coloured rather than deeply toned. Life was not so well known to the young man; he saw it through its æsthetic reflections; it had not revealed all its deep earnestness and meaning to him. Politics he had thought of, but they were the politics of the ancient republics and kingdoms, not of the land of the Stuarts and the Puritans. Moral Philosophy had been contemplated through its abstract teachings, not by the terrible revelations of stormy passions, and vehement or ambitious men. The youthful poet is the dreamer; he studies poetry through the pomp and the beauty of Nature; sauntering by the hedges, through the deep forests and woods, more frequently to be met with there by the English wanderer; thus,

doubtless, while rambling from field to field, alternating his country life by occasional visits to London, the desire was strong within him to see something of foreign shores, and cities, and scenes, and men; he heard the roar of the voices of the advancing people: rumours came to him of the magnificent but mysterious old republics of Italy, the cities of Tasso and Petrach, of Dante and Columbus, of Macchiavelli and the De Medicis. He had studied in the world of books; he had studied in the scenery of English life; and now he wished to study in the wide world of travel through distant lands.

CHAPTER III.

MILTON TRAVELLING.

About the year 1637, the mother of Milton died; and he now felt himself at liberty to carry out a favourite object that had long been before his mind,—namely, to make the tour of Europe. He sought and obtained his father's permission. This Mr. Hayley supposes to have been "the more readily granted, as one of his

motives for visiting Italy was to form a collection of Italian music." His great object doubtless, was to observe other countries and men; other manners and institutions. It affords proof of the high respectability of the character of Milton, that he was furnished with an elegant letter of direction, introduction, and advice, from the famous Sir Henry Wotton, himself worthy the name of a poet, who might well have furnished the study for L'Allegro. He was a long time ambassador from the Court of James the First to the Republic of Venice: a fine specimen of the courtly cavalier. An introduction from such a man must have been, indeed, of great importance. If the space of this book did not require that we tarry no more than is absolutely necessary by the way, the letter of Sir Harry might be inserted in this place. We may notice, however, his diplomatic advice—"to keep the countenance open, and the thoughts close." This notice of the friendship of the amiable and accomplished courtier, whose whole heart and admiration had been won by the poet's "Comus," and by a short interview with him, is yet the more interesting as he seems to have been, with this exception, unrecognised in England. Strange but true, at

Florence, Rome, and Naples, he was received with every demonstration of regard. Unknown by his own countrymen, in the land of Dante and Petrarch, of Ariosto and Tasso, he was received with distinguished honour; and, perhaps, this is scarcely occasion for wonder.—The reign of Charles I. was not a great period in the history of English literature, and the writings of Milton were more in the Italian vein of poetry, than suited to the taste of his own countrymen. He first visited Paris, and by the favour of Lord Scudamore, to whom he was introduced by Wotton's friendly letters, he not only received letters of introduction to the principal merchants and other persons of importance in all the places he proposed to visit, but he was also introduced to Grotius, the ambassador from the celebrated Queen Christina of Sweden to the French Court.—From France he proceeded to Italy. Italy had not then resigned her empire over the minds of men; the crozier of the Papacy, indeed, was broken, but the monarchy of Genius held full sway and authority. To us, she has a name in story; but at this period her greatest men were living, or had only just ceased to live. England was unknown in the worlds of Art and Taste; but Italy, in addition to her

ancient fame, had the living reputation of genius in Architecture, in Music, in Painting, in Poetry. The Italian cities had scarcely ceased to be the mistresses of the world.—Venice and Florence, from their marts and exchanges, still were felt in the halls of Trade; and as republics, (although indeed the seats of the most exquisite tyranny,) the name might attract the young enthusiast for Liberty, desirous to know how far the word so loved was the symbol of a substance or shade. It must ever be a source of regret to us, that Milton kept no account of his travels. We know nothing, therefore, of the enthusiasm with which he must have trod the land of which he must have so often read in connection with the valour, eloquence, wisdom, and virtue of its ancient citizens. The rapture with which he beheld the magnificent relics of classic ages, or breathed the bland atmospheres, and saw the clear bright skies so different to those of our cold northern clime;—the thrill of ecstacy with which the Mediterranean, or the Adriatic, the Bay of Naples, the Alps, or the Appenines were first gazed upon. All these expired, and left no trace of their power immediately behind them. But, although we know nothing of these raptures, we do know that he

was introduced to, and became the wonder and the favourite of, many men who were then known to the world, and have since become most distinguished for their literary labours. It may be interesting here to quote his own words—none can be better—in which he gives some account, both of his travels, and his reception as he passed along:—

"Taking ship at Nice, I arrived at Genoa; and afterwards visited Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. In the latter city, which I have always more particularly esteemed for the elegance of its dialect, its genius, and its taste, I stopped about two months; when I contracted an intimacy with many persons of rank and learning, and was a constant attendant at their literary parties; a practice which prevails there, and tends so much to the diffusion of knowledge and the preservation of friendship. No time will ever abolish the agreeable reflections which I cherish of Jacob Gaddi,* Carolo Dati,† Frescobaldo, Cultellero, Bonomatthai, Clementillo, Francisco, and many others. From Florence I went to Sienna, thence to Rome; where, after I had spent about two months in viewing the

* The historical painter.

† A nobleman of Florence, author of an essay on the Discoveries of Galileo, and of the Lives of the Fathers.

antiquities of that renowned city, where I experienced the most friendly attentions from Lucas Holstein,* and other learned and ingenious men, I continued my route to Naples; there I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I had travelled from Rome, to John Baptista Manso, Marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on 'Friendship.' During my stay, he gave me singular proofs of his regard; he himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and more than once paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure he gravely apologised for not having shewn me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion.

"When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England, made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home. While I was on my way

* Librarian of the Vatican.

back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English jesuits had formed a plot against me, if I returned to Rome, because I had spoken too freely of religion; for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion; but if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I nevertheless returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and for about the space of two months I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion, in the very metropolis of Popery."

He mentions his excursion to Lucca, his crossing the Appenines, his passing through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice, Verona, Milan, and the Lake of Geneva; his route through France, and arrival at home, after an absence of about one year and nine months, at the very time that Charles, having broken the peace, was attempting to renew the war with the Scotch. The autobiographic notices we have quoted, are from the Second Defence of the People of England, and form a part of an eloquent defence of his early life against the charges, as insane as they were false, of the licentiousness of his early days.—Milton's name coupled with licentiousness,

indeed! ! It is needless to linger longer over the travels of this illustrious man: every where homage and respect awaited him. The Marquis Baptista Manso, to whom reference has been made, addressed to him a Latin poem, the translation of which runs thus:—"Did your piety equal your talents, form, countenance, grace, and manners, you were not so much an Englishman, by Hercules! as an angel." The exception in reference to piety, relates to Milton being a Protestant; a zealous Romanist could see no piety out of the borders of his own church. Yet even Romanists did him honour—he was admitted to the library of the Vatican. The Cardinal Barberini did him especial honour: he met him at his own gate, and conducted him into the assembly.

This journey must have been of very great importance to the poet—the man—the citizen. Other countries were presented to him; he saw what courts were like; he beheld man under new aspects: nor was it long before he developed, in some degree, the importance of the brief time to him, between his departure from England and his return. How vast the difference between "Comus" and the "Areopagitica," between the gentle spray, the flashing, silvery beauty of his "Lycidas," or

the "Arcades," and the muscular strength, the electric power of his sonnets. The imagery he beheld must have been of immense service to him in his stupendous and mightiest poem. It is difficult to believe that the same grandly-shaped and massive sublimity of structure of thought could have been grouped in the poem, if other countries had not been seen, and other buildings contemplated, than those afforded to the eye of the resident merely in the English metropolis. It would be easy to select lines and images, and those some of the finest, in the poems, which are evidently portraits and pictures sketched from the vivid memory.—Doubtless, the objects of a poet's wonder and admiration are everywhere: to him there is nothing mean, nothing little; but a mind like Milton's, traversing the Appenines—sailing over Laman—sitting beneath the shadow of Jura—or treading the fairy halls and palaces of the City on the Sea, then only declining from the hoar majesty of her long reign, and still wearing proudly her tiara of towers,—or, amidst the monuments of Rome—Rome of the Cæsars—Rome of the Medici—the Rome of Virgil and of Petrarch. Places like these, to visit, would form an era indeed in the life of a poet already great, and capable of climbing

the highest cliffs of sublimity ; and the result of his travels is written in his immortal works. How valuable would be even the experience of eighteen months of observation of such a man, too, in his future situation of Latin secretary to Cromwell. And, indeed, there lay before him, as he looked towards the Mediterranean, a still more precious land—Hellas—Arcadia—the Morea ; Homer—Phidias—Demosthenes—Herodotus ; real names, indeed, all these to John Milton. Why does he not go on a few months longer, which would be well bestowed in looking over those monuments ? His country was struggling for liberty at home ; and he could not, therefore, consent to be idle abroad, when his country needed every brave heart to sympathise and struggle for her : when the struggle came, how differently acted Hobbes, the philosopher of despotism and materialism ! He set out upon his travels, and returned not until he could do so without risk. Ah ! and how, my friend, would you act in such a case ? and how should I ? Well, I suppose, if, like Hobbes, we believed in nothing—if ours was a cold, dead materialistic despotism —like him we should wisely fly ; but if, like John Milton, we believed in Truth and Freedom, and that God does defend the right,

and that justice, in the long run, comes round, why, I think we, too, like him, should hasten to take our parts where Duty beckons in the great strife.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TIMES.

The life and writings of Milton cannot be understood and appreciated, without a large acquaintance with the times in which he lived. Milton's life, as a mirror, reflects those times; his mind was certainly not created, but it was moulded by them. His life was something like an epic representation of those great days, the heroic grandeur of which has never been equalled in England before or since; the mind of our patriot poet, absorbed within itself the minds of the great actors around him; there was no greatness which he had not within him. Looking upon him now, he seems to be the image of his age; his mind was cast in a mould originally singularly stern; it was not Saxon, it was not Grecian, in its structure; his birth-

place, England; his favourite studies of Grecian lore appeared to be only absorbed into a grand Hebraistic temperament of soul; he rises before us shrouded in the grand habiliments of the ancient prophet; he combines within himself the poet, the prophet, the martyr, and the priest; he is always sublime; this man never stoops to littleness; he traverses perpetually a region of ideas, of lofty imaginations; he assimilates the minds of other men into the healthy temper of his own soul; we feel that he can be not only all that is great in other men—but greater;—Cromwell, Pym, Hampden, Elliot, Vane—there is no great mood of their minds, but we trace it in the mind of Milton—all that appears great, striking, heroic in the men of those days;—we are certain that Milton comprehended all—could have done all.

This great man—this greatest of men—stands in a two-fold light before us: the greatest of poets, if to reach the highest points of sublimity, and majesty of conception, and diction, is to be the greatest; he was yet more than this—he was a great citizen—a great teacher; to him, evidently, it was of more importance to perform well the duties of life, than to indulge in the raptures and pleasures of poetry. He did not forget the citizen, in the

poet or the student; and he was impelled to unite himself with the apostles of freedom, the founders of civil and religious liberty; this has provoked the ire of every apologist of despotism since, who has mentioned his name; at every page of his life, they deplore the sad infatuation of this man, who "forsook the muses" to write for the Puritans; it is amusing to listen to the lugubrious notes of these mourning critics. The blaze of this astounding genius is beyond all dispute: had he been of less note as a poet, or a scholar, all honour had been denied him; but the mind of Milton is the noblest product of the English soil. He was, indeed, the many-sided man; and, therefore, as there is no denying to him immeasurable learning, and wonderful genius, pity is expressed for this defect and stain upon his memory—that he wrote in defence of liberty—that he poured a torrent of overwhelming eloquence and sarcasm upon prelatical assumption—that he wrote against a king. "Seduced by the gentle eloquence of fanaticism, he listened no more to the wild and native wood-notes of Fancy's child." Thomas Warton and Sir Egerton Brydges never tire of pouring forth their mournful plaints over the desertion of Milton from the service of Poetry to the service of

Liberty; it is easy to perceive that the laments of these mournful Tories would not have been heard had he chaunted the high praises of prelates and kings:—here is a melancholy string of dolorous moanings from Sir Egerton Brydges—

"Now Milton's evil day began; he entered into the stormy controversies which blind the imagination, and harden and embitter the heart. It was not for sublime talents like his, to entangle themselves in these webs; his mighty genius could not move under the oppressive weight of so much abstruse, and, I will add, useless, though multifarious and astonishing, learning! I cannot help lamenting that Milton spent so many years in these bitter political and sectarian squabbles: 'coarser minds' would have done for that work. He was always powerful—sometimes splendid; but here his passions were human, and too often mingled with earthly dross. Whatever merit Milton might have in the able and learned discharge of his political services, it is deeply to be lamented that his brilliant and sublime faculties were so employed. How the slumbering fire of his rich and ever-varying fictions must have consumed his heart and his brain. How he must have fretted at the base intrigues of courts

and councils, and the turpitude of human ambition. To make a man of business requires nothing but petty and watchful observation, cold reserve and selfish craft: to catch the moment when caution in others is asleep; to raise hopes, yet promise nothing; to seem to give full information, and yet to be so vague that every thing is open to escape.—How can the poet practise such arts as these? He is lost in himself; he is wrapped up in his own creations. He lost nineteen precious years of his middle life, in those irritating occupations, from the age of thirty-two to fifty-one: after that age, he occupied the remaining fourteen years of his life principally in poetry. . . . It is melancholy to think how much of grand invention, which he might, in these long years have put forth, has been lost to the world."

So also Thomas Warton commenting upon the frustrated intention of Milton to proceed to Sicily and Athens:—"Countries" says he, "connected with his finer feelings, interwoven with his poetic ideas, and impressed upon his imagination by his habits of reading, and by long and intimate converse with the Grecian literature. But so prevalent were his patriotic attachments that, hearing in Italy of the commencement of the national quarrel, instead of

proceeding forward to feast his fancy with the contemplation of scenes familiar to Theocritus and Homer, the pines of Etna, and the pastures of Peneus, he abruptly changed his course, and hastily returned home to plead the cause of ideal liberty. Yet in this chaos of controversy, amidst endless disputes concerning religious and political reformation, independency, prelacy, tithes, toleration, and tyranny, he sometimes seems to have heaved a sigh for the peaceable enjoyments of lettered solitude, for his congenial pursuits, and the more mild and ingenuous exercises of the Muse. In a Letter to Henry Oldenburgh, written in 1654, he says,—'Hoc cum libertatis adversariis inopinatum certamen, *diversis* longè et *amœnioribus* omninó me studiis intentum, ad se rapuit *invitum*.' And in one of his prose tracts, "I may one day hope to have ye again in a still time, when there shall be no chiding. Not in these noises." And in another, having mentioned some of his schemes for epic poetry and tragedy, 'of highest hope and hardest attempting,' he adds, 'With what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse

disputes, from beholding the bright countenance of Truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies,' &c. He still, however, obstinately persisted in what he thought his duty. But surely these speculations should have been consigned to the enthusiasts of that age, to such restless and wayward spirits as Prynne, Hugh Peters, Goodwin, and Baxter. Minds less refined, and faculties less elegantly cultivated, would have been better employed in this task :

> ——————'Coarse complexions,
> And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
> The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool:
> What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
> Love-darting eyes, and tresses like the morn ?—' "

This sort of language is disgraceful. It exhibits either strange ignorance of the times in which Milton lived, or servility to despotism—perhaps, a disposition towards despotism.—Very far from being in unison with the generous spirit of noble minds. In this spirit most of the editors of Milton have regarded him.—From this condemnation we must exempt, however, the present Bishop of Winchester, who edited Milton's "Treatise on Christian Doctrine," when he was the courtly librarian

to George IV.; and more especially must we exempt Dr. Symmonds, whose life, published as an introduction to the poet's works in 1806, was not only most elegantly, but most generously, written.

Milton is charged with indulging in coarseness and severity in his prose writings. Before this judgment is pronounced upon him, we should weigh his times, the character of those whom he refuted, and the events which called him into the field of political disputation. Our readers have not to be informed that he lived in the days of the Stuarts and the Protectorate, but they may not be aware of all the atrocious circumstances of ecclesiastical and civil despotism beneath which the country groaned, until they were cast off by the heroism of the people during the civil war.

Charles I. attempted to govern by absolute authority, without the sanction of parliament: he was a lawless king; he acknowledged no right in his people to remonstrate with him, or to refuse him subsidies of money. One of the first of the acts of his reign was to order all persons of £40 per year to receive knighthood; by this means the exchequer was reinforced.

Monopolies were granted beyond all prece-

dent. The soap-boilers were incorporated; by these he received £10,000. Then the starch-makers, for their incorporation, paid the king, the first year £1,500, the next year, £2,500, and £3,500 yearly. The king then raised £30,000 by commissions appointed to inquire into the state of the land—fining very heavily those persons who encroached, or could by any pretext be said to have encroached upon the common or forest lands. Lord Salisbury was fined £20,000, Lord Westmorland £19,000, Sir C. Hutton £12,000; and all this, in order that he might evade law, and do without his Commons House of Parliament. He levied a tax called ship-money, of tonnage and poundage, in contravention of all equity: and Alderman Chambers, because he said that merchants were more screwed up and wronged in England than in Turkey, was prosecuted by the Star Chamber, and fined £3,000.

We spoke of the profits of some of the monopolies; but monopoly and taxation fenced and fettered everything—no matter how insignificant.

"Nothing," says Forster, "that contributed unincumbered by monopoly to the comfort of the people, was permitted to continue."

For the atrocious instances of detestable civic

tyranny we must content ourselves with referring to the chronicles of the time.* Milton lived in the times when Dr. Leighton, for writing a book against prelacy, was twice publicly whipped, stood two hours in the pillory, and had his ears cut off, his nose slit, and a cheek branded with the letters "S. S." (sower of sedition); was imprisoned for ten years, and released by the Long Parliament, but not before he had lost his sight, his hearing, and the use of his limbs. Can we wonder that Milton was severe upon the bishops?

Those were the days when Prynne, Burton, and Bostwick stood in the pillory, and had their ears cut off for their criticisms upon the bishops.

They were the palmy days of despotism, when Sir Robert Berkley, for giving his opinion legally, as one of the judges of the Court of King's Bench, upon the subject of ship-money, was taken into custody on the bench, and borne away to prison!

Those were the days of the cruel bigot Laud, the archbishop, who may be best described as

* But if our readers would refer to documentary evidence acceptable to all, they will find abundant quotations in Foster's "Statesmen of the Commonwealth." Vol. I., pp. 64, 67, 68.

a Bonner sanctified by a Dominican inquisitorial fiereeness—a dreamer, whose religion was made up of mummeries and shows, and who was disposed to persecute to death all who would not Anglicise a Papacy, and make the History of the Church of England the same detestable record of blood and crime, which had marked Rome. Is the severity of Milton to be wondered at? Is it to be wondered at that Milton is severe upon the actions of the king, when Bishop Warburton declares, what all contemporary writers confirm,* that "his best friends dreaded his ending the war by conquest, as knowing his despotic disposition?" Is it wonderful that Milton should deal severely with the queen, the beautiful Henrietta Maria, whom the king so unroyally and uxoriously loved—the woman who was in no slight degree the cause of all his miseries—who was, perhaps, the cause of his death, for "she dissuaded him from his attempt to escape from Carisbook Castle, in order that she might carry on her adulterous intrigue with Jermyn."—Charles I. is usually sheltered from the remarks of those who impeach his character, by eulogies

* See Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, VIII., 624—627; and especially Warburton's notes.

upon his private virtues ; but there is evidence enough that he, too, shared the character of Charles II., for licentiousness of conversation, if not of life. Milton, however, only glances at his social life, but he does spare his public and kingly.

"Yet here he asks, 'whose innocent blood hath he shed, or what widows' or orphans' tears can witness against him?' After the suspected poisoning of his father, not inquired into but smothered up, and him protected and advanced to the very half of his kingdom, who was accused in parliament to be the author of the fact; (with much more evidence than Duke Dudley, that false protector, is accused upon record to have poisoned Edward the Sixth;) after all his cruel rage and persecution—after so many years of cruel war on his people in three kingdoms! Whence the author of 'Truths Manifest,' a Scotsman, not unacquainted with affairs, affirms, that 'there hath been more Christian blood shed by the commission, approbation, and connivance of King Charles, and his father, James, in the latter end of their reign, than in the ten Roman persecutions.' Not to speak of those whippings, pillories, and other corporal inflictions, wherewith his reign also before this war was

not unbloody—some have died in prison, under cruel restraint; others in banishment, whose lives were shortened by the rigour of that persecution wherewith so many years he infested the true church."

From the exhibitions given in Milton's day, either of the deeds of bishops or kings, it is not wonderful that any breadth of severity should be used to denounce, and to hold them up to scorn and ridicule. It is not to be denied that the language of Milton is frequently very severe; his language, when it falls, blasts and burns like a sulphurous bolt. But then there was reason for this, whether the bolt fell upon the cause of bishop or king, Of bishops what did he see? The pious Juxon, elevated by the king to the post of lord treasurer, in the course of a few years wrung from the people, and lodged in the exchequer, principally by illegal means, £900,000; and when the civil sword had struck down the father, whose character was no secret to him, what did he behold?—Charles, the son, in Paris, the companion of harlots—entering into the plots of murderers. Who does not know the proclamation issued from Paris, giving liberty to any man whomsoever, within the three kingdoms, by pistol, sword, or poison, or any other ways or means

whatsoever, to destroy the life of Oliver Cromwell, a certain low mechanic fellow, which act it was declared would be acceptable to God, and to all good men: for which noble work the perpetrator was promised a reward of £500 a year for ever, and the honour of knighthood, on the faith of a Christian king. This was murder in intent: but the same men, Charles Hyde, Ormond, and the rest of them, were the authors of murder in fact—namely, that of Dr. Dorislaus, the English ambassador at the Hague; which was speedily followed by the murder of Ascham, the ambassador at Madrid.

Of Dr. Dorislaus' murder at the Hague, Clarendon gives the following account:—

"Whilst he was at supper, the same evening that he came to the town, in company of many others who used to eat there, *half-a-dozen gentlemen* entered the room with their swords drawn, and required those at the table 'not to stir; for there was no harm intended to any but the agent who came from the rebels in England, who had newly murdered their king.' And one of them, who knew Dorislaus, pulled him from the table, and killed him at his feet: and thereupon they all put up their swords, and walked leisurely out of the house, leaving those who were in the room in much amazement and

consternation. Though those who were engaged in the enterprise went quietly away, and so out of the town, insomuch as no one of them was ever apprehended, or called in question: yet they kept not their own counsel so well, (believing they had done a very heroic act,) but that it was generally known, they were all Scottish men, and most of them servants or dependants upon the Marquis of Montrose."* In the same volume of his work the historian has to relate the trial and execution of this same Marquis of Montrose, who was condemned by the parliament of Scotland "to be hanged upon a gallows thirty feet high, for the space of three hours." Numbers of his adherents underwent the same fate; among them probably the murderers of Dorislaus, of whom one, it seems, was saved, under I know not what pretence.— The murder of Ascham by the royalists, at Madrid, took place under circumstances similar to those which attended that of Dorislaus.— Clarendon gives us one version of them, written in so extenuating a tone, and with so many contemptuous epithets bestowed on the victims, that we are almost led to suppose he was not clear of the guilt, which, at all events, he seems

* History VI., 297.

not to have thought very great. In fact, we may certainly infer that, against republicans, this "noble historian," as Warburton is fond of calling him, considered assassination allowable; for he speaks, evidently with approval, of assassinating the Protector, which he artfully attributes to the whole nation. Warburton says, moreover, that "this is confirmed by Thurlow's papers, by which it appears that the royal family *did project and encourage Cromwell's assassination.*" The bishop also is inclined to look upon the affair with no very severe eye: "Without doubt," says he, "*they had high provocation.*" Notwithstanding which he is not satisfied, though he has clearly some misgivings, that such a step would have been justifiable. "But such a step *appears* neither to have been *prudent* nor *honourable.*"* Only *appears!*

Is it wonderful that Milton was severe, when the pious churchman, who had volunteered to attack the poet, gave the following advice to all his acquaintances, "if they were genuine Christians?"—"You that love Christ, and know this miscreant wretch, stone him to death, lest you smart for his impurity."

* History VI., 44. Warburton's Notes on Clarendon, VIII.

These citations give some account of the times. We very much fear that the tempers of some men, in reference to these events, have not much altered in many places. Charles is a martyr still. The return of Charles II. was a glorious Restoration—these regicides all deserved death: the king is surrounded by a beautiful ideal halo still. All these illusions charm, like figures on the mist. Stern History reads quite another dissertation on the times. Facts abundantly show who were the wrong-doers, and what was the wrong done. Milton is the noblest representative of the state of those days: before his eyes had passed all the great events of this era of our story. To one who so profoundly loved the heroic attitudes of the soul, it must have been indeed a delight to live in constant intercourse with men whose souls were as noble and brave as the most illustrious of the land of Epaminondas and Camillus—to be a sharer in the events which were to liberate a great nation;—to behold link by link snapping from her fetters—the proud prelates who had used the screw, the boot, the pillory, and the executioner's axe, to control the laws of thought, banished; and the licentious nobles humbled, whose cruel taxes and monopolies had fastened heavy fetters upon the health and

happiness of the hall, the grange, and the cottage. He had also beheld one who in his person had utterly eclipsed all that the most magnificent hero of ancient story had performed, and who carried with him into his seat of power the more humble and domestic virtues of the little homestead of Huntingdonshire.

Milton beheld all this; he lived on terms of intimacy and friendship with this illustrious man; did his form rise to his imagination when he first conceived, and invested with the splendour of his genius, him, who "seemed no less than archangel ruined?" Then came those other days—days we can never recall without a sigh—the days when the nation relapsed again to all its old licentiousness, and to more than all its old persecution, despotism, and blood-shedding; England's darkest and most disgraceful days; when a traitor, in the pay of France, sat on the throne of England; when the Dutchman mocked the British flag at Sheerness, and threatened to pour his fiery forces along the Thames; when Vane was borne to the scaffold, to be murdered, and Hugh Peters was yet more horridly slaughtered; when ship after ship drifted over the seas, with brave hearts, flying from the exterminating knife and rope of bigotry, yet finding themselves fronted even

there, by the pursuing demon; the days when ignominy was not confined to the living, but wreaked, with a pitiful ferocity, on the dead. Milton lived through these days: of the first portion of these times his prose works are the best exposition; to the second, many allusions are contained in his poems. He saw human nature in its meanest and its most magnificent forms; he saw a state sinking, weakened in all her limbs, by the enervating influence of slavery and despotism; he saw the venom of priestcraft poisoning the waters of the fountain of life; he saw the noblest and the best men in the kingdom fined, imprisoned, and persecuted, for conscience' sake; he saw what freedom could do for a people—how righteousness could exalt a nation—how confidence might be restored to the heart at home, and to its fame abroad. As he saw these things clearly, he spoke of them earnestly. He blew a triumphal trumpet over the ruins of despotic sway in England; and when the land relapsed, and needed his services no more,—when the work, which his conscience told him to do, was done, he retired out of sight, sat still, and in the silence of his soul pondered over those times—(mourning as he saw the Shaftesburys and the Hydes, the reptiles that fatten upon the corruption of courts),—over the

times of the high-minded Hampden, the scholastic Selden, and the shrewd Pym; but, unrepining, undespairing, invoked to his meditations the memories of old studies, and commended his spirit confidently to the future, for fame, for usefulness, and reward.

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

When Milton was thirty-five years of age, about Whitsuntide, or a little after, he took a journey into the country, nobody knowing, certainly, about the object of his journey; but attributing it to a desire for recreation. After about a month's absence he returned, a married man; he had, in the interim, married Mary, the eldest daughter of Mr. Richard Powell, a justice of the peace, of Forest Hill, near Shotover, in Oxfordshire. This Justice Powell was, undoubtedly, a roistering cavalier, a man of reckless and expensive habits; at Shotover their life had been passed in noise and merriment, singing

"Hey! for cavaliers, ho! for cavaliers,"

and other wild royalist ditties of the time; frequently enough they had a banquet at the Hall, and danced away merrily, to the strains of the timbrel and the rebeck. This would at once condemn the unsuitableness of the marriage; added to which, Anthony Wood relates, that Milton courted, married, and brought his wife to London in one month's time. He appears to have been fascinated by the lady's beauty; but it seems probable, that both John Milton and Mary Powell were, in some measure, compelled to the match. Powell was greatly in debt to the elder Milton. It appears that when Milton was a student at Cambridge, his father advanced to Powell £500, on mortgage, for his son's use; this settlement may have been made as a provision for the poet; this debt, probably, was never paid, nor £1000 which should have been paid as a dower with his wife. Powell was a distressed and ruined man, and it seems probable that he sacrificed his daughter to escape from his monetary liabilities.

Our author's sentiments concerning marriage are worthy of him, worthy of woman, and worthy of the divine institution itself; the

reader may gather them from the following passage :—

"Marriage is a covenant, the very being whereof consists not in a forced cohabitation, and counterfeit performance of duties, but in unfeigned love and peace. And of matrimonial love, no doubt but that was chiefly meant, which by the ancient sages was thus parabled; that Love, if he be not twin-born, yet hath a brother, wondrous like him, called Anteros; whom while he seeks all about, his chance is to meet with many false and feigning desires, that wander singly up and down in his likeness. By them in their borrowed garb, Love, though not wholly blind, as poets wrong him, yet having but one eye, as being born an archer aiming, and that eye not the quickest in this dark region here below, which is not Love's proper sphere, partly out of the simplicity and credulity which is native to him, often deceived, embraces and consorts him with these obvious and suborned striplings, as if they were his mother's own sons; for so he thinks them, while they subtlely keep themselves most on his blind side. But after a while, as his manner is, when soaring up into the high tower of his apogeum, above the shadow of the earth, he darts out the direct rays of his then most

piercing eyesight upon the impostures and trim disguises that were used with him, and discerns that this is not his genuine brother, as he imagined; he has no longer the power to hold fellowship with such a personated mate. For straight his arrows lose their golden heads, and shed their purple feathers, his silken braids untwine, and slip their knots; and that original and fiery virtue given him by fate, all on a sudden goes out, and leaves him undeified and despoiled of all his force; till finding Anteros at last, he kindles and repairs the almost faded ammunition of his deity, by the reflection of a co-equal and homogeneal fire Thus mine author sung it to me; and, by the leave of those who would be counted the only grave ones, this is no mere amatorious novel;—though to be wise and skilful in these matters, men heretofore of greatest name in virtue have esteemed it one of the highest arcs that human contemplation, circling upward, can make from the globy sea whereon she stands; but this is a deep and serious verity, showing us that love in marriage cannot live nor subsist unless it be mutual; and where love cannot be, there can be left of wedlock nothing but the empty husk of an outside matrimony, as undelightful and unpleasing to God as any other kind of hypocrisy."

Now this view of things was altogether strange to Mistress Mary Powell, or rather to Mrs. Milton. The poet's house was so grave and decorous and still, that his bride soon wearied of the restraints and fetters imposed by her husband; she was averse to the philosophic life he led. His solemn organ was not to her taste, nor the grave discussions which she, perhaps sometimes heard by his fireside or in his parlour. She, poor creature, would gladly have subscribed a fiddle for the one and a dance for the other. Neither her husband nor anybody else imputes to her any unfaithfulness to the virtue upon which woman's virtue must always be founded, but the whole mischief of the matter was, that she had no more met the husband of her spirit than her husband had found the companion of his. She requested his permission to go home to her friends for the remaining part of the summer; he gave her permission to stay until Michaelmas, when they parted on the steps of that fine old garden-house in Aldersgate-street. They neither of them thought that they should meet no more, until the misconduct of the wife, and the genius of the husband turning even that misconduct into fuel to feed the flames of that genius, should have produced some works which for

good or ill hang upon the immortality of his name, and during his life and ever since have provoked the praise or blame of theologians and moralists. The lady did not return—*would* not return; she continued at her father's house, near Oxford, where at that time the king had his head-quarters, and it is probable that, deceived by the view of things so near, it seemed to the father that the royalist cause was once more likely to be successful, and therefore grieved that he had disgraced his family by uniting with so complete a democrat. Milton, meanwhile, was living in a state of constrained widowhood: but such a man could not be idle, and would not perhaps feel much his solitude. He spent much of his time with Lady Margaret Leigh, the daughter of the Earl of Marlborough, whose sprightly wit, good sense, and flow of happy conversation, contributed to relieve his hours of their monotony and gloom. As all his attempts to induce his wife to return were unsuccessful, he took the firm resolution to repudiate his wife, and never to receive her back again; and he thought it proper to attempt a justification of this step; and therefore, in 1644, he published, without further ceremony, "The Doctrines and Discipline of Divorce," which he dedicated to the Parliament,

calling upon them to take into consideration the domestic liberty of the subject. He was soon involved in ample discussion; and to prove himself a firm believer in the doctrines he had published, he was negociating another marriage very seriously with Miss Davis, a young lady of great wit and beauty. But this was prevented by a most unexpected occurrence. His wife had now left him four years; but being one day on a visit at the house of a relation named Blakeborough, in St. Martin's-le-Grand, he was surprised to see his wife come in from an adjoining room. He had never expected to see her again. She threw herself at his feet, confessed her fault, and entreated his forgiveness. At first he appeared to be unmoved and inexorable; but at length his generous nature yielded. Beauty in distress is powerful; a promise of oblivion to everything that had passed was given,—a perfect reconciliation took place. It has been suggested that the tender scene of our first mother at the knees of Adam most probably derived its hint from this interesting scene in domestic life.

> "She ended weeping; and her lowly plight,
> Immoveable till peace obtain'd from fault
> Acknowledged and deplored, in Adam wrought
> Commiseration. Soon his heart relented

Tow'rds her, his life so late and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress,
Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,
His counsel, whom she had displeased, his aid;
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost,
And thus with peaceful words upraised her soon:"

Like a truly generous soul, Milton did not half forgive. The royal cause was utterly lost, and the Powells were ruined; and in their ruin of course, Milton was most painfully involved. Powell's house was seized by the parliamentary party; and, in the catalogue of the lords, knights, and gentlemen who had compounded for their estates, (printed in 1655,) he is thus branded as well as fined—"Richard Powell, *delinquent*, per John Pye, Esq., £576 12*s.* 3*d.*" And now, Milton generously threw open his doors to those who had treated him so disdainfully; to the father, who had never paid him the £1000 marriage portion, or the £500 borrowed on the mortgage; to the mother, who had encouraged the daughter to forsake her husband; to a family, in short, the occasion of much of the persecution he then was undergoing, in consequence of his published principles upon "Divorce."

Surely this is a magnanimity worthy of a soul too lofty for the mean and petty retalia-

tions of revenge. The date of the death of the first wife is said to have been 1653. Thus our readers have the history of the marriage, whence originated those famous pieces of matrimonial polemics, to which reference has been made. Of these treatises Mr. Fletcher says, "Every page is strewed with felicities, and the *mens divinior* shines out with a lustre unsurpassed by himself on happier, though not more interesting themes. It will not be interesting to our readers to analyse these discourses to any length; yet all the questions connected with marriage or divorce are discussed with an amount of learning, freedom, and poetry, too, truly astonishing Milton confutes the idea so indoctrinated into the mind from Romish teachers, that Marriage is a sacrament. It must be admitted that he handles passages of Scripture with transcendental freedom, making very frequently his own reason the interpreter between the text and conscience or duty.—From the citation we have already given, our readers will perceive that his conception of marriage meets its highest fulfilment in spiritual relationship. "Certainly it is not the mere motion of carnal lust, not the mere goad of sensitive desire. God does not principally take care of such cattle. It results from the desire

to put off a solitary loneliness, by a ready and reviving associate, "whereof who misses by chancing, or a mate and spiritless mate remains more alone than before." From this dissonance arises hate—"hate, which is of all things the mightiest divider; nay, is division itself. To couple hatred therefore, though Wedlock try all her golden links, and borrow to her aid all the iron manacles of the law, it does but seek to twist a rope of sand, which was a task they say that posed the devil; and thou, sluggish fiend in hell, Ochus, whom the poems tell of, brought his idle cordage to as good effect, which never served to bind with, but to feed the ass that stood at his elbow." And when this is the case, shall the parties continue to drag on together this wretched existence, or shall they separate? "They shall continue together," say both the ecclesiastic and common law: "They should separate," said John Milton. This created against him great hostility from all sects, all preachers, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents; and the foolish covered the performances with their licentious ribaldry. Howell speaks of Milton as a noddy that writ a book of wiving. All joined in a wild outcry against the author; and, in a life of him, published only four years since by

Joseph Ivitny, a highly respectable Baptist minister—a life highly eulogistic to the memory of the poet, this is still put as a serious blot upon his character, that he published the various treatises upon Divorce. The great pivot upon which the discussion in the books turns is, that adultery is not the greatest breach of matrimony; that there may be other violations as great: but it is in the 12th chapter of the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" that the true reasons are assigned, both why Mrs. Milton left her husband; and why, upon her leaving him, he pursued this method of punishment.

"It is most sure that some, who are not plainly defective in body, yet are destitute of all other marriageable gifts, and, consequently, have not the calling to marry. Yet it is seen that many such, not of their own desire, but by the persuasion of their friends, or not knowing themselves, do often enter into wedlock, where finding the difference at length between the duties of a married life and the gifts of a single life—what unfitness of mind; what wearisomeness; what scruples and doubts to an incredible offence and displeasure are like to follow between, may soon be imagined; whom thus to shut up and immure together,

the one with a mischosen mate, the other in a mistaken calling, is not a cause which wisdom and tenderness ought to use. As for the custom that some parents and guardians have of forcing marriages, it will be better to say nothing of such savage inhumanity, but only that the law which gives not all freedom of divorce to any creature endued with reason so assassinated is next to cruelty."

Here, doubtless, was the source of the disagreement between Milton and his wife; and although he was so far advanced in life, it seems that he was in some measure, probably, compelled to the union by the debt owing by Justice Powell to his father; and he intimates that it is possible to be even advanced in life, and yet to have no experience or knowledge touching this, the most serious business of life. Upon the whole it must be admitted that Milton's Dissertations do open serious portals for matrimonial licentiousness. Yet the present state of the law of divorce is notoriously unjust and inhuman; nothing can well be worse.—Milton, too, was most unfortunately situated. Perhaps it is not too much to presume that these volumes would not have been written, after he had tasted the blessedness which he shared with his second wife, with whom he

enjoyed a portion of happiness, apparently, all too brief. His "espoused saint" as he styles her in the fine sonnets to her memory; or Elizabeth Minshall, his third wife, to whom he makes grateful and touching allusion in his Recapitulative Will, who read to him, and soothed the hours of his blindness and his death-bed.

He saw that very worst extreme of marriage life in his first marriage days. Mary Powell herself perhaps became the wife of his affections in a later day. We may safely presume so, although perhaps never in so high a degree as either his second or his third wife. And what might kindness have done, when exercised by such a tongue, and a heart so full as Milton's? She gave him no opportunity to try; she left him when he had began to care for her, to soothe her irritations, to add to her joys, to deny himself for her, and, by a thousand little attentions, to purchase the best immunities of love. Had there been an opportunity for this, whether they had been successful or not, it would have been a more difficult matter to pen the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IDEA OF "COMUS."

The Masque of Comus is one of the most constantly read and referred to of all the poems of Milton; it was written in 1634, when the poet was twenty-six years of age; and through every line it presents gleam after gleam of extraordinary beauty. As soon as we open the poem, we are introduced to a fairy world, peopled by beings who move across its pages with all the dignity and majesty of humanised philosophy. The poem is affluent in sentiment, images, and diction, yet founded upon a most simple circumstance. It was written for presentation at Ludlow Castle, where the Earl of Bridgewater kept his court as Lord President of Wales.—The earl's two sons, and his daughter, Lady Alice, were benighted, and lost their way in Haywood Forest, and the two brothers, to explore their path, left their sister alone in a tract

of country inhabited by boors and savage peasants.

On these simple facts, the poet raised a superstructure of fairy spells and poetical delight.* The poem abounds in allegory; it is ethical and didactic: it discourses of the nature of virtue, of the true character of temperance, of the method of the seductions of vice. Nor less does it abound in figures delineative of country life, with its scenes and occupations. Let the reader linger over the rich fullness of descriptions that bring before us

> "The grey-hooded Even,
> Like a sad votarist, in palmer's weeds;"

or those hints so suggestive of evening life in the country.

> "Might we but hear
> The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
> Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
> Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
> Count the night-watches to his feathery dames.
> 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
> In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs."

Comus is the great arch-reveller, the tempter of the poem; he is impersonated Sensuality.

* Sir Egerton Brydges.

To him everything that is exists only for enjoyment and lust. He is fabled to hold his reign in the woods, with his rude Bacchic rout of fellow-revellers; there they quaff the cups which transform the express resemblance of the gods to brutish forms of wolves, or bears; of ounce, or tiger; of hog, or bearded goat; while the victims of the enchantment, (so perfect in their misery) not once perceive their foul disfigurement: and, as Comus is impersonated Sensuality, so the lost Lady of the masque is impersonated Virtue. No better description can be given of the general idea of the poem than the discussion between Comus and the Lady who has fallen into his power. In reply to the invitation of Comus to taste of his charmed cup, she says:—

——————"None
But such as are good men can give good things,
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.
COMUS.—Oh foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge* doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,

* "Budge," furred.

Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please, and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk
To deck her sons; and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutcht† th' all-worshipp'd ore, and precious gems
To store her children with: if all the world
Should in a pet of temp'rance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
Th' All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility,
Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with plumes,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and th' unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.

LADY.—I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes
Obtruding false rules prank'd in Reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature
As if she would her children should be riotous

† "Hutcht," concealed, or kept as in a coffer.

With her abundance; she, good caterese,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare temperance:
If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumber'd with her store:
And then the Giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid; for swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted, base ingratitude
Crams—and blasphemes his Feeder."

Comus may stand as the god of all those who make enjoyment the great leading and central principle of life; to whom nothing lives, and brightens, and blooms, but it has a sensual meaning, and intention, and application, Man is subject to the temptation of two devils —the devil of sensuality and sense, the devil of intellectuality and spirit. The delineation of the first is in Comus, of the other in Satan. The latter is a rare subtle, abstracting spirit; the other is a universal, visible, and materialising one. The reasonings of Comus lie on the surface,—they are their own end; the reasonings of Satan lie deeper, and all things are

ulterior. The arguments of Comus are intended to make the world one wide saloon of enjoyment. Comus can see no other reason in all this creation than that its whole variety and furniture should be bestowed for eating, or drinking; for gluttony, or intemperance. Comus is perpetually asking what we shall do with things. Nothing is reserved for beauty, nothing for the glory of the universe or the entertainment of the soul. All things are valued just as they have the stamp of utility or sensuality upon them. Some Comuses would find too many superadditions in the world. The magic enchantments of colour and the tones of singing birds, and the variegated livery of clouds and flowers, would be all too much for these epicureans. Comus is quite afraid that if all be not gathered for luxury or vanity, that the air would be darkened with plumes, the sea, overfraught, would swell with diamonds, "emblazing the forehead of the deep;" the earth be cumbered, and Nature strangled with her waste fertility; and it may be noticed in the poem, that this gorgeous inflation of language is most appropriately used by the genius of sensuality, and contrasts well with the chaste simplicity of language used by the lady I am sometimes disposed to look at man universally

as a sort of Brobdignagian Comus, to whose appetite and whim everything is compelled to yield. A bird sweeps by gracefully on the wing,—"Bring me that bird, I'll eat him;" a beast stalks gracefully through the field—"I'll eat him;" a silkworm spins in its cocoon —"Seize it, I'll wear it;" a poor bee constructs its hive,—Comus makes a grip at it—"Honey! my friend, honey!" And I do not so much in every instance condemn this; I quarrel not with that Providence to whom we owe such bounties; but I do quarrel with Comus, because he sees no beauty in anything that does not minister immediately to his appetite, his passions, and his pride. It may indeed be true that man is the principal personage on this little theatre of things. It may indeed be true that all are a kind of drapery and preparation for him; but that mode of speech is not to be admired by which we describe all things as ministering to our enjoyment: we should see a hidden beauty, a spiritual compensation in all things, and reason through the rough curtain to reach the Holy of Holies.

By the side of, and in opposition to, Comus, is that of the lady, who may be already understood by the extract we have introduced. She illustrates the self-reliant and instinctive force

of virtue; she is self-illumined; she is introduced to us by her brother, before, indeed, we see her beset by the tempter; in the discourse they hold together, and which excited a sneer from Dr. Johnson, the elder brother does not fear for his sister; because she has that sacred and sure defence—a light within—inner purity; therefore—

"Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude,
Where with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' th' centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun:
Himself is his own dungeon."

And, again—

"This I hold firm,
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt;
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd;
Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last

Gather'd like scum, and settl'd to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consumed: if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble."

"Comus" is a dissertation upon virtue; upon that sure and steady guide, which, in all circumstances, conducts the humble and teachable wanderer. Thus says the Lady:—

"What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.—
Oh, welcome pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity;
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glist'ring guardian if need were
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove."

"Comus" is a fine poem on which to hang

homilies; and we much more readily hang our homilies than our criticisms. All virtue is developed in conflict, in fighting. In every character it may be said, where there is no difficulty there is no virtue. Surely Milton himself was a noble instance of this. This princely genius, this great moral instructor, was not less consistent as a man than great as a poet; and, therefore, of all men the man to write "Comus." We cannot understand "Comus;" we cannot see its worth and high moral glory unless we translate ourselves to the times during which it was written. They were the times when first began the long warfare between Puritan and Cavalier. They were times of all but universal intemperance; and nowhere was the intemperance of a more disgusting and universal character than at the courts of James I. and Charles I. The moral purity claimed for the latter is simply ridiculous; it abounded with all the follies and all the grossness of the time. The literature and the history of the period teem with evidences of astonishing vice. "Comus" was written as a Masque; it rises before us with a chastity truly solemn. After a perusal of the performances bearing that name, during the same period, in almost every instance they were

only made the theatres for the exhibition of intemperance and folly; and the most chaste of them is characterised by a looseness of expression which no chaste mind could tolerate in our day, either in the parlour or on the stage. It finely illustrates the true beauty of Milton's mind, that his Muse is always robed in matronly dignity and grace; and that even in his earliest years, when the blood of youth is rebellious, and the fancy wild, his thoughts and measures move and march to the sound of Dorian music.

CHAPTER VIII.

MILTON ON EDUCATION.

It must be always important to know what the most eminent scholar of his own, or any age, thought and said upon education, and the method of imparting the higher branches of it. He conveyed what he had to say to Mr. Samuel Hartlib, of whom little is known, but that he was a foreigner, and doubtless, a wise and fruitful scholar. Milton published his letter to

him the same year in which he published his elaborate tract on Divorce. This tract has only received the sneers and contempt of Dr. Johnson, and other ushers and schoolmasters; but, if too vast and magnificent to be realised by any private individual,—although some have come near to the accomplishing of Milton's ideas, even in private establishments—it contains hints of a very practical character; and from what we know of the method of teaching pursued by the illustrious author, (himself a schoolmaster,) it seems to be, as far as possible, a copy of his own arrangements. It is far in advance of the pedantic methods of the time; in it, the author reminds his correspondent, that learning is not, and cannot be, its own end. It is to repair the ruins of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright; and, out of the knowledge to love him, and to imitate him, to be like Him as we may; the nearest, by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the best perfection. "And thus, though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet, if he had not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned

man, as any yeoman or tradesman, competently wise in his mother dialect only." Hence, "first, we do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek as might be otherwise learned easily and delightfully in one year."

In this letter is indeed laid down a scheme for the perfect education of those especially who are intended to take part in the great and more public affairs of life: a complete and generous education fitting to a man to perform "justly, and skilfully, and magnanimously, all the arts both of peace and war." The house in which instruction should be given, should be both school and university; there should be no necessity to leave it to go to another college, unless to perfect the knowledge of the pupil in the more erudite portions of Law or Medicine. But scholarship is usually in the youthful days of life a drudgery and a hardship; the obedience given is not given willingly; the mind is not inflamed to the love of learning, and the fervid admiration of lofty virtue: and this is to be traced mainly to imperfect and ineloquent masters. The right master will catch the mind of the scholar with mild and effectual persuasions: he will illus-

trate his teachings by his own example: he will temper a lesson to every opportunity by his own life; he will infuse ardour into the minds of his friends; yet there shall be no mere unloving labour in their pursuits. "Even geometry may be taught playing, as the old manner was." With so noble a scholar as Milton, we may be sure that the study of the classics is not only insisted on, but those things also which lie near our individual and social happiness. He insists on these. "In course, should be read to them, but from no tedious writer, the institution of physic."

It is a sorry thing in Milton's view of the matter, to be compelled to call in the aid of the physician and surgeon upon every emergency; nay, in some instances it will be impossible that such aid can be procured. A man should know his "own tempers, and humours, and seasons; he should be a physician to himself and to his friends." The education of the school-room too, should have a distinct bearing upon the future pursuits of life: in such an institution the experience of expert hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries; and in the other sciences, architects, engineers, mariners, and anatomists may be procured; and thus lessons be given, having

reference to the future routine of ordinary daily labour, to which the youth or the man may be called. It would be a sorry method of knowledge that should concern itself alone with the words, and be mindless of the things—to set before the student excellent Greek, and leave him unprovided with the tools wherewith to win his way through the difficulties of life about him. And now the judgment of good and evil presents itself; the young and pliant affections are cultivated with the lessons of the wise ancients, and of sacred learning, applied to the conduct and discipline of life; they should be led to the knowledge of good, and to the hatred of all evil; this calls for high and educated perceptions, and out of the study of morals grows that of politics, a branch of morals thus to understand the beginning, end, and reason of political societies, that they may not be in a dangerous fit of the commonwealth: such poor shaken uncertain reeds of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counsellors have lately shown themselves, but steadfast pillars of state. "After this they are to dive into the grounds of law and legal justice." He recommends that the youth of the land shall travel—not learn principles; but to enlarge experience. Finally, he insists

upon diet; upon it there is not much to say, save that it should be plain, healthful, and moderate. Of the plan of education thus recommended, he says:—

"Only I believe that this is not a bow for every man to shoot in, that counts himself a teacher; but will require sinews almost equal to those which Homer gave Ulysses; yet I am withal persuaded that it may prove much more illustrious; howbeit, not more difficult than I imagine, and that imagination presents me with nothing but very happy, and very possible, according to best wishes; if God have so decreed, and this age have spirit and capacity enough to apprehend."

One could scarcely have supposed that even Johnson, from a tract like this, could have found much occasion for carping and sneering; he found it, however, not only an occasion for this, but for playing off a great deal of the pride of superior wisdom. It may be supposed, that he never read the letter to Master Hartlib: the passage in which he criticises Milton's system of education has often been quoted; and Sir Egerton Brydges quotes it, and endorses it saying, "Had Johnson always written so, what a beautiful and complete work he would have made." A beautiful and

complete work indeed! To misconceive and misinterpret utterly the opinions of the man, whose life he was writing! A beautiful and complete work! beautiful and complete cant. In fact, as St. John well says in his notes on Milton's prose works, Johnson here attempts to obtain the credit of being a practical man.

"Those authors," he says, "therefore, are to be read at schools, that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians. Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantic or paradoxical; for, *if I have Milton against me*," (observe *that*,) "I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of Nature to speculations upon life; *but the innovators whom I oppose*," (he represents Socrates as *an innovator* in his day,) "are turning off attention from life to Nature. They seem to think that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars: Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil."

But the treatise of Milton is eminently practical. The course of study he recommends turns upon the developement of the life. No-

thing that Johnson ever said was so practical as this treatise. Milton *does* recommend the study of poets, historians, and orators, because they are generally the treasures of moral truth. He *does* recommend the turning philosophy to the study of Nature,—and Nature viewed with immediate reference to life in its most practical movements. It was that unfortunate passage, in commending the study of politics as a branch of moral conduct which aroused the ire of Johnson. A more shameless piece of criticism we do not know. The man decorates himself in the plumage of Milton's "Wisdom," in his account of the things in which true learning should consist; and then, with an effrontery marvellous even for Johnson, says:—"See! this should be the order of study, not yours." Utter ignorance of the interior of the letter, *or* the most perverse and wilful misrepresentation alone can be assigned to the biographer. The first we are prevented from assigning. From several portions of the criticism we are compelled, therefore, to attribute to him the dishonesty of the last.

The methods of education pursued amongst us have not yet reached Milton's standard; and it is remarkable, that neither in the university or the school, we have as yet a method

free from cumbrous dogmatism, or ridiculous unfitness. In few instances has education any reference to future position in life. There are few attempts made to make our youth comprehend the law of their being as it should be comprehended, both in the life of the body, and in the life of the state. Culture is needed still —perfect culture; culture of the frame—culture of the mind. It was Milton's desire to bestow this—to give to the youth the power to attain all the riches of intellect; and to watch them earnestly, so that the body should not interfere with the developement of the mind, but by proper training be a means of imparting, constantly, new sources of happiness to the spirit. There are a number of reformers of the present day, who, without knowing it, are attempting to step in the pathway Milton trod: and for all their labours and efforts at training the minds of their fellows to deal wisely and virtuously with their bodies—to search and explore the foundations of morals and politics, they receive the same thanks that Johnson gave Milton—sneers, as at would-be wonder workers, misinterpretation, and attribution of erroneous motive, and sometimes the borrowing of arguments and thoughts to decorate the baldness and sterility of their adversaries.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AREOPAGITICA.

"THIS is a perfect field of cloth of gold," says Macauley, in his Essay on Milton; and truly if any one desire to see our author in his best and noblest harness, they should read this most magnificent performance. It is an apology for the liberty of the press; and this great right is argued with an affluence of eloquence and illustration—with a pomp and majesty of language—which place the work in the very foremost rank in the catalogue of the choice pieces of English Literature. The occasion of the paper has passed away, but it is full of passages which may be ever quoted as the texts of mental freedom, and relevantly to the more immediate subject of his discourse, he expounds the nature of Virtue, and the office and functions of government: he saw how vain

was the attempt to impose shackles on the human mind, and he pleads for freedom as the surest means of working out the great life of virtue. This discourse was occasioned by the tyranny of the Presbyterians. They were the party then exercising predominant power; and some opinion may be formed of the length to which they proceeded, from the following entry in the Journals, the 12th of July, 1644:—"A book entitled *Comfort for Believers about their sins and troubles*, by John Archer, sometime preacher at Lombard Street." The Assembly denounced it as blasphemous; and the Lords ordered it to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman, and all the copies of it to be called in. It was necessary, before a book could be printed, that it should receive the imprimatur of some person authorised by government. The object proposed by Milton was to procure the most entire liberty of the press, but subject to liability to prosecution, should that liberty be employed for licentious or injurious purposes. Amongst the prose writings, this occupies the same post as the "Paradise Lost." Amongst the poems, it is the chief work, and is a noble offering of bold and patriotic virtue, faith, and enthusiasm of genius and scholarship, upon the shrines of

Liberty. He venerates the spirits of books; "for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as the soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

He appeals to antiquity: he shows that none of the worthy and ancient Republics of Greece or Italy ever prohibited any but immoral, defamatory, or Atheistical publications. He enters into the history of this prohibiting and licensing. Martin V., the Pope of Rome, so named, was the first that prohibited by special Bull,—for about that time Wickliffe

and Huss were growing terrible. Then the Spanish Inquisition and the Council of Trent, engendering together, brought forth or perfected those catalogues and Expurging Indexes, that rake through the entrails of many a good author, with a violation worse than any could be offered to his tomb.

"And thus ye have the inventors and the original of book-licensing ripped up and drawn as lineally as any pedigree. We have it not, that can be heard of, from any ancient state, or polity, or church, nor by any statute left us by our ancestors elder or later; nor from the modern custom of any reformed city or church abroad; but from the most anti-Christian council, and the most tyrannous inquisition that ever inquired. Till then books were ever as freely admitted into the world as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifled than the issue of the womb: no envious Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual offspring; but if it proved a monster, who denies but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the sea? But that a book, in worse condition than a peccant soul, should be to stand before a jury ere it be born to the world, and undergo yet in darkness the judgment of Radamanth and his colleagues, ere it

can pass the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious iniquity, provoked and troubled at the first entrance of reformation, sought out new limboes and new hells, wherein they might include our books also within the number of their damned. And this was the rare morsel so officiously snatched up, and so ill-favouredly imitated by our inquisiturient bishops, and the attendant minorites their chaplains."

Thus in the first place, disposing of the history of these intellectual prohibitions, by fastening the origin opprobriously upon those who did not stop with questionable writings, but in a Carthagenian Council, laid under their ban and curse all the productions of the heathen world of genius and science, and ridiculing that inquisitorial folly,—"as if St. Peter had bequeathed them the keys of the press, as well as of Paradise, and committed the approving and licensing of books into the hands of two or three gluttonous friars." He laughs at the tale told us by St. Jerome, of the devil whipping him for reading Cicero. Strange "to correct him only, and let so many more ancient fathers wax old in those pleasant and florid studies, without the lash of such a tutoring apparition.

"But if it be agreed we shall be tried by

visions, there is a vision recorded by Eusebius, far ancienter than this tale of Jerome, to the nun Eustochium, and besides, has nothing of a fever in it. Dionysius Alexandrinus was, about the year 240, a person of great name in the church, for piety and learning, who had wont to avail himself much against heretics, by being conversant in their books; until a certain presbyter laid it scrupulously to his conscience, how he durst venture himself among those defiling volumes. The worthy man, loath to give offence, fell into a new debate with himself, what was to be thought; when suddenly a vision sent from God (it is his own epistle that so avers it) confirmed him in these words: 'Read any books whatever come to thy hands, for thou art sufficient both to judge aright, and to examine each matter.' To this revelation he assented the sooner, as he confesses, because it was answerable to that of the apostle to the Thessalonians: 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.'

"And he might have added another remarkable saying of the same author: 'To the pure, all things are pure; not only meats and drinks, but all kinds of knowledge, whether of good or evil; the knowledge cannot defile, nor consequently the books, if the will and conscience

be not defiled. Wholesome meats to a vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome; and best books to a haughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evil. Bad meats will scarcely breed good nourishment in healthiest concoction; but herein the difference is of bad books, that they, to a discreet and judicious reader, serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate. Whereof what better witness can ye expect I should produce than one of your own now sitting in parliament, the chief of learned men reputed in this land, Mr. Selden; whose volume of natural and national laws proves, not only by great authorities brought together, but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative, that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainments of what is truest.'"

And from hence follows a most beautiful and truthful discussion upon the nature of virtue, and its active or passive character, in order that the higher lessons of self-reliance may be taught, and that duty may not result from the mere observance of a prescribed and written law, or be the mere following of an unreasoning impulse. Good and evil now grow together in

the world almost inseparably: it is difficult to separate them, "for this is that door that Adam fell into of knowing good from evil, that is, of knowing good by evil." Milton will not praise a cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed: that virtue that knows not the utmost that Vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue; its whiteness is only an excremental whiteness. The garlands of virtue are only bestowed after the heat, and dust, and conflict of the battle or the race. But if the books printed were all most sedulously supervised, this strictness, he argues, would effect but little, unless all other things, of like aptness to corrupt the mind, were also rectified: thus all recreations, to be consistent, must be submitted to the same ordeal. How wanton, frequently, the motions of the dance! how voluptuous the airs of music! Rebecks and recorders, to many airs and madrigals, lend a softness not altogether their own, to breathe through our chambers. So villages must be visited by these licensers, to inquire what lesson the bagpipe reads. The windows, also, and the balconies must be thought on; these are shrewd books, with dangerous frontispieces set to sale.

Gluttony also is a dangerous corruption: rec-

tors must be appointed to make daily inquisition into the daily riotings of the lewd people. Clothes are frequently wanton: sober, industrious work-masters, or tailors, must be licensed, and inspectors appointed to watch the conduct of youth, when walking together. Thus the consequences of legislative actions like these were placed in their true light. These things were all done eventually both in England and America: these follies have, beyond anything else, surrounded the name of Puritan—the name of a magnificent people—with contempt; they may be considered as the most prominent causes of the failure of the Commonwealth in England, and were the origin of innumerable cruel persecutions in the various States of America. Thus Milton is brought to remark upon the province of Government: "Here," he says, "the great art lies—to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work." It is not positive legal enactment that forms the bond, pillar, or ligament of the Commonwealth, but the unwritten, or at least unconstraining, laws of virtue. Man is not a sequestered being. We are in the world—a world not squared by Atlantean or 'Utopian politics, but a world

of evil. Man is left free by God—surely not to be compelled by his fellow man.

"Many there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress.—Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam. Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures around us, but that these, rightly tempered, are the very ingredients of virtue?"

Sin is not to be removed by removing the matter of sin. "Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left; ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness."

Men will not be made chaste by being shut up in hermitages: the rule of God with man is not rigorously to stint his enjoyments, but to pour around him, to profuseness, all desirable things, commanding him, at the same time, to prudence, temperance, justice, and continence: and were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing: for God surely esteems more the growth and completing of one virtuous person, than the restraint of ten vicious. And albeit whatever we hear or see,

sitting, walking, travelling, or conversing, may be fitly called our book, and are of the same effect that writings are,—yet, grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far insufficient to the end which it intends. Do we not see, not once or oftener, but weekly, that continued court-libel against the parliament and the city, printed, as the wet sheets can witness, and dispensed among us for all that licensing can do? Yet this is the prime service, a man would think, wherein this order should give proof of itself.—"If it were executed," you will say.—But if execution be remiss or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter, and in other books?

Passing over some matters pertinent especially to that age, he proceeds to notice the prostrate condition of some Continental nations where this kind of inquisition flourished:—

"When I have sat among their learned men, (for that honour I had,) and been counted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom, as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition into which learning amongst them was brought; that this was it which had damped the glory of Italian wits; that nothing

had been written there now these many years, but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought. And though I knew that England was then groaning loudest under the prelatical yoke, nevertheless I took it as a pledge of her future happiness, that other nations were so persuaded of her liberty."

This leads to the most splendid portions of the Discourse. He dreads the emasculating influence of licensing orders; for knowledge thrives by exercise, like our limbs and our complexions. If the doctrines taught, and the books read, are only those imposed by authority, and not received by the inborn lively faith of the people, then, although they be true, they become the occasions of heresy.

"A man may be a heretic in the truth: and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. There is not any burden that some would gladlier post off to another than the charge and care of their religion. There be—who knows

not that there be?—of Protestants and professors who live and die in as errant and implicit faith as any lay Papist of Loretto."

Only let the notion become general; endorse the belief that conscience is not a matter of personal concern—that religion may be the the work of a proxy,—and the merchant, the man of wealth, will give over all concern about it to some divine of note and estimation; to him, through all difficulties, he adheres, resigns to him the warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys, and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion. This is the evidence of his piety—that he associates with that man; his religion comes with *him*, and goes with *him*. He is near to religion, or far from religion, as he is near to, or far from the priest. Thus his religion becomes "a dividual moveable," and goes, and comes near him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, prays, is liberally supped, and sumptuously laid to sleep; rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well-spiced brewage, he is better breakfasted than he whose morning appetite would gladly have fed on green figs between Bethany and Jerusalem; his religion then

walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop, trading all day without his religion.

The indifference of pleasure will be equally as glad of the responsibility thus removed from the conscience, as the indifference of trade; the riotous and lewdly disposed, when they learn that nothing is to be written but what passes through the custom-house of certain publicans, that have the tonnaging and poundaging of all free-spoken truths, will be willing to cut out what religion ye please.—"There be delights, there be recreations, and jolly pastimes, that will fetch the day about, from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year, as in a delightful dream; and thus all the people in the realm will be starched into a fine conformity—an obedient unanimity—a staunch and solid piece of framework, as any January could freeze together." The influence will be the same upon the clergy themselves—there is no motive to search out the truth: "The parochial minister, who has his reward, and is at his Hercules' Pillars in a warm benefice," will be quite inclined to favour this stereotyping;—treading the constant round of a few doctrinal heads, "with the infinite helps of interlinearies, breviaries, synopses, and other loitering gear," he will have no incentive

to diligence; a licensing church will be a lazy church; no fear of his people being seduced, no fear of their being better instructed, exercised, or disciplined: the priesthood may then hold themselves in security, fearing no attack or assault,—when thus every avenue for the entrance of strange opinions, or doubtful propositions, is barred by the licenser. And here is the most serious and afflictive thought, that, like an enemy, it stops up all the havens, ports, and creeks, by which might be imported to us our richest merchandise—Truth; and thus the policy of the teacher of Christianity would differ little from that by which the Turk upholds the Alcoran—by the prohibition of printing. Then follows, that often quoted passage, flaming with seraphic eloquence,—

"Truth, indeed, came once into the world, with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape, most glorious to look on: But when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who,—as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with Osiris,—took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time, ever since, the sad friends of truth, such as

durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, lords and commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint.

"We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust, and those stars of brightest magnitude, that rise and set with the sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs bring them o such a place in the firmament, where they may be seen evening or morning? *The light which we have gained, was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge.*"

And then he proceeds to argue this prohibition, as altogether unworthy of England and Englishmen: with a noble and expressive but respectful indignation, he says, "Lords and

Commons of England ! consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are governors, —a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit;" he reminds them of the ancient capacities of the inhabitants of this land; that Pythagoras and the Persian wisdom have taken date from the old philosophy of the island; that the ancient Roman preferred the mind of Britain to that of neighbouring lands; that then, when writing, England was the university of Europe, the school of Transylvanian youth, from the mountainous borders of Russia, and beyond the Hercynian wilderness; that even staid men came from the remotest lands to study here; that this land was chosen before any other, that from her, as out of Zion, should be proclaimed, and sounded forth by Wickliffe, the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all Europe:— "*Behold now this vast city; a city of refuge, the mansion-house of liberty*, encompassed and surrounded with his protection; the shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers working, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defence of beleaguered truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to pre-

sent, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation; others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement.

"What could a man require more from a nation so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge? What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing people a nation of prophets, of sages, and of worthies?—*Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks;* methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fount itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms."

And then, finally, he disposes of another fear resulting from the publication of divers works; namely, the fear of schism, and separation, and the calls for charity. "*How many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief*

stronghold of our hypocrisy to be ever judging one another? I fear yet the iron yoke of outward conformity hath left a slavish print upon our necks; the ghost of a linen decency yet haunts us."

But we are bigotted and fearful; we had rather the world went without light at all, if the light came not through our casements. Yet God is not confined in his method of dispensing light to the world. He deals out his beams by degrees, as our eyes are best able to bear them; and here, although the Westminster Assembly of Divines held and published tenets most in accordance with those of Milton, he will not have them to be proposed as most absolute. True religion is not in set places, and assemblies, and outward callings; it is not in the convocation-house any more than in the chapel of Westminster. No! the canonized creed may be chartered, and a corporate body of Defenders of the Faith may be appointed, but all insufficient without plain conviction and the charity of patient instruction, to edify the meanest Christian who desires to walk in the spirit, and not in the letter of human trust. They are inefficient for all the number of voices that can be there made—yes! though Henry VII. himself, (with all his liege

tombs about him,) should lend their voices from the dead to swell their number. The whole meaning of this immortal performance may be presented in one of its great sentences; —"Give me the liberty to know, to alter, and to argue freely, according to conscience above all liberties."

Thus we have set before our readers some account of the Areopagitica. They have also some of its noblest passages, and most pointed aphorisms. It has been praised, but not much noticed, by Milton's biographers. Sir Egerton Brydges, whose life of our author abounds in citations from his prose writings, says scarcely a word of this; nor does Todd Johnson bestow upon it even a flippant snarl: but it should be lodged in the memory of every young man, whether we regard its political or theological ethics, the magnificence of its conceptions, or its diction.

It equally commands our homage: but the book contains much, highly pertinent to our present political and religious state. Books are now issued from the press freely enough: but the evils to which Milton alludes, and which he prophesied would result from the inquisitorial hand of the licenser, have followed from other causes. How much have we of a fashionable

pietism! of a fanned, and sprinkled, and respectable formulary! It has come to this, that, if you look over a man's library, you may generally judge of the man. There you behold a set of books, the Shibboleth of which he has learned to pronounce. Palestine is bounded within the walls of those few volumes; all, without, is Canaanitish lore: the classes of character, described by Milton, are among us. Without a question, books are excised at many theological custom-houses. There is a timid and treacherous fear in the minds of many; still, truth is not left to fight its own battle through the mind. For ourselves we are no lovers of uniformity; we are not desirous that all men shall be trimmed and squared to our taste: we love to contemplate mind shaping itself out in various ways and forms. We cannot say that we behold with great joy the increase of the number of sects or sectaries; because, while this certainly exhibits large national freedom, it also exhibits narrowness and contractedness of mind. That man is much to be pitied, the truth and purity of whose worship depends upon the temple in which he bows. Of course he will seek a temple where no dishallowing rites or mummeries present themselves. Yet even there the good man is

free to worship, if he can feel his freedom—if he can see Jesus—if to him God is a spirit, and present in this mountain, or in Jerusalem, he will be able to lift up his heart, and to adore. It is only, of course, where men, and minds, and books, are free, that sects can greatly increase; and the absence of division, —the tame, cold uniformity, which is the boast of some creedsmen, is in truth their disgrace. Mind is enfeebled and stunted—the priest holds the key to every discussion—it is, therefore, a significant hint of the prevalence of opinion, which is liberty, where temples of varied architecture, and creeds of varied fashion rise over the land; but it is not too much to hope, that the vestments of the Church will at last be woven without seam; the threads may differ in the colour and the shade; perhaps some may be of coarser texture than others, but the increase of truth will be the increase of charity. The spirit of all believers will walk forth in the enlarged dignity of their devout Christian manhood; and we would fain hope, that manhood, and earnestness, the beauty, and rectitude, and love, breathed in the Areopagitica may be exhibited in myriads of lives.

CHAPTER X.

EIKONOCLASTES.

Soon after the death of Charles I., was published a book, purporting to be a posthumous document written by the royal martyr, entitled "Eikon Basilike," the Image of a King, "A Portraiture of his sacred Majesty in his Solitude and his Sufferings." Milton was ordered by the Council to answer this book, which was exciting no little degree of attention in England, where forty-eight thousand five hundred copies are said to have been sold; the genuineness of the book has long been set at rest. It is satisfactorily proved to be the production of Dr. Gauden, Bishop of Exeter. Milton's answer was written in English, and became speedily known over the Continent; it was one of those books condemned to be burnt by the hangman on the Restoration. If any one would obtain an accurate knowledge of the

times, especially if it is desirable to see the shallow sophistries of the Royalists put to flight or crushed, let this work be diligently read and studied; it is a noble masterpiece of literary architecture; one knows not whether to admire most the intimate knowledge of all the events and details of the Civil War, or the swift, logical vehemency with which they fall upon the piles of cant and twaddle abounding in the "Eikon." The sentences swell and heave, like bellying sails, with the majesty and grandeur of the great sentiments of humanity and piety; sometimes, and frequently, smart aphorisms meet us—truth distilled, and condensed into a line or two; sometimes, the words roll, like waves, beneath the fierce wind of a noble, declamatory scorn; it contains some of the noblest truths of theology and religion,—of morals and politics: a few illustrative passages may be cited, indicating the varieties of style: —

"'He had rather wear a crown of thorns with our Saviour.' Many would be all one with our Saviour, whom our Saviour will not know. They who govern ill those kingdoms which they had a right to, have to our Saviour's crown of thorns no right at all. Thorns they may find enow of their own gathering, and their own twisting; for thorns and snares, saith

Solomon, are in the way of the froward ; but to wear them as our Saviour wore them, is not given to them that suffer by their own demerits. Nor is a crown of gold his due who cannot first wear a crown of lead."*

" But what needed that? 'They knew his chiefest arms left him were those only which the ancient Christians were wont to use against their persecutors, prayers and tears.' O sacred reverence of God! respect and shame of men! whither were ye fled when these hypocrisies were uttered? Was the kingdom then at all that cost of blood to remove from him none but prayers and tears? What were those thousands of blaspheming cavaliers about him, whose mouths let fly oaths and curses by the volley: were those the prayers; and those carouses drunk to the confusion of all things good or holy, did those minister the tears? Were they prayers and tears that were listed at York, mustered on Heworth Moor, and laid siege to Hull for the guard of his person? Were prayers and tears at so high a rate in Holland, that nothing could purchase them but the crown jewels? Yet they in Holland (such word was sent us,) sold them for guns, carabines, mortar-

* Eikon, chap. vi., 3.

pieces, cannons, and other deadly instruments of war; which, when they came to York, were all, no doubt by the merit of some great saint, suddenly transformed into prayers and tears: and, being divided into regiments and brigades, were the only arms that mischiefed us in all those battles and encounters."*

"He tells us that what he wants in the hands of power, he has in the wings of faith and prayer; but they who made no reckoning of those wings while they had that power in their hands, may easily mistake the wings of faith for the wings of presumption, and so fall headlong."†

"Of secular honours added to the dignity of prelates, since the subject of that question is now removed, we need not spend time: but this perhaps will never be unseasonable to bear in mind out of Chrysostom, that when ministers came to have lands, houses, farms, coaches, horses, and the like lumber, then religion brought forth riches in the church, and the daughter devoured the mother."‡

Upon the king's complaint of the denying him the attendance of his chaplains, he remarks, "A chaplain is a thing so diminutive and

* Eikon, chap. x., 162. † Eikon, chap. x., 164.
‡ Eikon, chap. xxvii., 271.

inconsiderable, that how he should come here among matters of so great concernment, to take such room up in the discourses of a prince, if it be not wondered, is to be smiled at. Certainly by me, so mean an argument shall not be written; but I shall huddle him as he does prayers. The Scripture owns no such order—no such function in the church; and the church not owning them, they are left, for aught I know, to such a further examining as the sons of Sceva, the Jew, met with. Bishops or presbyters we know, and deacons we know, but what are chaplains? In state, perhaps, they may be listed among the upper serving-men of some great household, and be admitted to some such place, as may style them the sewers, or the yeomen-ushers of devotion, where the master is too resty or too rich to say his own prayers, or to bless his own table. The fervency of one man in prayer cannot supererogate for the coldness of another; neither can his spiritual defects in that duty be made out, to the acceptance of God, by another man's abilities. Let him endeavour to have more light in himself, and not to walk by another man's lamp, but to get oil into his own."

"I believe that God is no more moved with a prayer elaborately penned, than men truly

charitable are moved with the penned speech of a beggar. Finally, oh ye ministers, ye pluralists, whose lips preserve not knowledge, but the way ever open to your bellies, read here what work he makes among your wares, your gallipots, your balms and cordials, in print; and not only your sweet sippets in widows' houses, but the huge goblets wherewith he charges you to have devoured houses and all; the 'houses of your brethren, your king, and your God.' Cry him up for a saint in your pulpits, while he cries you down for atheists into hell."

But we must break off from these questions, from a book so worthy of the author, and the people whom he defended. It is straightforward in the highest degree, a masterpiece of controversial logic; the cogency is irresistible: the book is, as previously intimated, invaluable as history, whether Charles were the author or not. The pleas of the image of a king were in his mouth before his death, and have been in the mouths of all his adherents and apologists ever since; but as Milton unveils his characters before he deals those destructive blows, he stands before us as the man he was. There is no insult, no mockery, there is no exultation over fallen greatness; there is not a time which

does not display the author's love of justice, and love of truth, and love of country, love of piety: while the image of the king from the words uttered by him, and from his repeated actions, is the image of baseness and hypocrisy, duplicity and despotism; while over the image Milton pours his resistless tide of eloquent exposition; withering every subterfuge, demolishing every argument, rectifying the false statements of the martyr. As we read the alternate pleas of Charles and the dignified replies of the poet—the martyr sinks to the driveller—the Latin secretary rises to the king.

CHAPTER XI.

MILTON AND SALMASIUS.

It will be known to most of our readers that Salmasius, a great northern critic, high in favour at the court of Christiana, Queen of Sweden, took upon himself to attack the people of England for their presumption in fighting with and killing their king. Milton, in his

reply to this attack, prophesies that "the very next age will bury his name in oblivion, unless this defence of the king may perhaps be beholden to the answers I give to it, for being looked into now and then;" and thus indeed has it fallen out; no one would know any thing of Salmasius, but that his name is thus associated with Milton. There was little politeness lost between these disputants; the insults offered by Salmasius to the republic were disgraceful, and his abuse of Milton himself is most virulent. He speaks of Englishmen as those who "toss the heads of kings about as so many tennis balls; who play with crowns as if they were bowls; and who look upon sceptres as if they were crooks." He reproaches Milton as being but a puny piece of man, an homunculus, a dwarf, deprived of the human figure, a bloodless being, composed of nothing but skin and bone, a contemptible pedagogue fit only to flog boys. Subsequently, finding that Milton was of a very handsome person, he accused him of being guilty of unnatural crimes, and glories that he has lost his health and his eyes in answering the "defence of the king." He malignantly sympathises with him that he has lost that beauty which made him so great a favourite in Italy. His

malignity is almost incredible: he stands at nothing to blacken the austere virtue of his antagonist, and to induce a belief that he was guilty of crimes "too infamous to name."* Milton did not reply with this kind of abuse, but he did with abuse of a more direct kind. His language is frequently vituperative; he meets his antagonist immediately; and to every attempt at argument he replies with overwhelming invective tipped with fire. Thus, Salmasius having said that in undertaking the king's defence, he found himself to be encompassed and affrighted with so many monsters of novelty, that he was at a loss what to say first, what next, and what last of all—Milton replies, "I will tell you what the matter is with you. In the first place, you find yourself astonished and affrighted at your own monstrous lies, and then you find that empty head of yours not encompassed, but carried round, with so many trifles and fooleries, that you not only now do not, but never did, know what was fit to be spoken, and in what method. 'Among the many difficulties that you find in expressing the heinousness of so incredible a piece of impiety, this one offers itself, (you say, which is

* Cowper's Life of Milton.

easily said), and must often be repeated; to wit, that the sun itself never beheld a more outrageous action' [than the putting to death of the king]. But by your good leave, sir, the sun has beheld many things that blind Bernard never saw. But we are content that you should mention the sun over and over. And it will be a piece of prudence in you so to do. For though our wickedness does not require it, the coldness of the defence that you are making does. 'The original of kings,' you say, 'is as ancient as that of the sun.' May the gods and goddesses, Damasippus, bless thee with an everlasting solstice; that thou mayest always be warm, thou that canst not stir a foot without the sun. Perhaps you would avoid the imputation of being called a Doctor Umbraticus. But alas! you are in perfect darkness, that make no difference between a paternal power and a regal, and that when you had called kings fathers of their country, could fancy that with that metaphor you had persuaded us, that whatever is applicable to a father, is so to a king. Alas! there is a great difference betwixt them. Our fathers begot us. Our king made not us, but we him. Nature has given fathers to us all, but we ourselves appointed our own king. So that the people

is not for the king, but the king for them. We bear with the father, though he be harsh and severe, and so we do with a king. But we do not bear with a father if he be a tyrant. If a father murder his son, he himself must die for it; and why should not a king be subject to the same law, which certainly is a most just one? Especially considering that a father cannot, by any possibility, divest himself of that relation, but a king may easily make himself neither king nor father of his people. If this action of ours be considered according to its quality, as you call it, I who am both an Englishman born, and was an eye-witness of the transactions of these times, tell you who are both a foreigner and an utter stranger to our affairs, that we have put to death neither a good, nor a just, nor a merciful, nor a devout, nor a godly, nor a peaceable king, as you style him; but an enemy, that has been so to us almost ten years to an end: nor one that was a father, but a destroyer of his country. That it is lawful to depose a tyrant, and to punish him according to his desserts—nay, that this is the opinion of very eminent divines, and of such as have been most instrumental in the late reformation, do you deny it if you dare. You confess that many kings have come to an

unnatural death: some by the sword, some poisoned, some strangled, and some in a dungeon; but for a king to be arraigned in a court of judicature, to be put to plead for his life, to have sentence of death pronounced against him and that sentence executed; this you think a more lamentable instance than all the rest, and make it a prodigious piece of impiety. Tell me, thou superlative fool, whether it be not more just, more agreeable to the rules of humanity, and the laws of all human societies, to bring a criminal, be his offence what it will, before a court of justice, to give him leave to speak for himself; and, if the law condemn him, then to put him to death as he has deserved, so as he may have time to repent, or recollect himself; than, presently, as soon as ever he is taken, to butcher him without more ado? Do you think there is a malefactor in the world, that if he might have his choice, would not choose to be thus dealt withal? And if this sort of proceeding against a private person be accounted the fairer of the two, why should it not be accounted so against a prince? Nay, why should we not think that himself liked it better? You would have had him killed privately, and none to have seen it, either that future ages might have lost the influence

of so good an example, or that they that did this glorious action might seem to have avoided the light, and to have acted contrary to law and justice. You aggravate the matter by telling us, that it was not done in an uproar; or brought about by any faction amongst great men; or, in the heat of a rebellion, either of the people, or the soldiers: but there was no hatred, no fear, no ambition, no blind precipitate rashness in the case, but that it was consulted on, and done with deliberation. If there were great difficulty in the enterprise, they did well in not going about it rashly, but upon advice and consideration."

The "Defence" is an analysis of the rights of kings over their subjects, or of subjects over their kings. It instantly elevated Milton to the highest reputation throughout Europe. It is said to have broken the heart of Salmasius. The Queen of Sweden, Christina, withdrew her patronage from him, and he soon after died. His work was published at the request of Charles II., but although it was not deficient in many points, it has long been buried in oblivion. Doctor Symmonds draws a parallel between Salmasius writing against the people of England, and Burke writing against the people of France: but in fact there is no pa-

rallel. Burke was a statesman—Salmasius, a vain and empty pedagogue: the Revolution of England was a noble rousing of the spirit of a great people to preserve their laws: the Revolution of France was a vehement burst of wild and lawless violence; the unchaining of a people's worst passions in murder and bloodshed. Salmasius, in his attack, employed only vile and scurrilous abuse; Burke adorned his subject with temper, and some of the noblest flights of poetry and eloquence.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SONNETS OF MILTON.

"MILTON, madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones." So said Dr. Johnson to Mrs. Hannah More, when the lady expressed her surprise that he who had written "Paradise Lost" should write such poor sonnets. In his Life he says, "They deserve no particular criticism; of the best, it can only be said, they are not bad; and only the eighth

and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation." Johnson thought, it appears, little of the sonnet and less of Milton. Neither of his criticisms have been adopted by men of better taste. One could almost believe that Wordsworth's fine sonnet upon "The Sonnet" was a reply to Johnson.

> "Scorn not the sonnet, critic! you have frowned
> Mindless of its past honours; with this key
> Shakspear unlocked his heart; the melody
> Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
> A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
> With it Camoens soothed an exile's grief;
> The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
> Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
> His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
> It cheered mild Spenser, called from Fairy land
> To struggle through dark rays; and when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
> The thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains—alas! too few."

Indeed, Wordsworth has for ever set the question of the literary dignity of the English sonnet at rest. This is a walk of Poetry in which he far transcends Milton himself. The sonnets of Wordsworth are so numerous, and breathe tones of such varied softness and majesty, that they have redeemed the character of that mode of composition from the neglect and

comparative scorn with which it was treated. Heads *have been* "carved on cherry-stones," and very beautiful heads too; though it must be admitted that, like some other curious pieces of human art, they need the microscopic glass to discover the wonderful proportions of their beauty. But here, in beautiful verity, we have the heads of weeping Madonnas, and of fiery Apostles,—of Satyrs peeping from the woody ambush, and Nymphs, with the thick clustering hair and speaking eye. There has frequently been felt a difficulty in reading the sonnet; its very ease has made it cumbersome to some minds; and our language is not so pliant and flexible as to tolerate, with good temper, innovations, and more especially, innovations from Italy. It is only the pen of a master that can bend the language to speak thus. The sonnet requires in its composition great fullness of thought and power of diction. Weak voices blow faintly through the best constructed pipes, and the mightiest organ depends for its inspiration upon the organist; but the accomplished player can call magnificence from insignificance: the one string in his hand shall stir you more effectively, than all the chords of music placed at the command of an indifferent player.

"In his hand
The thing became a trumpet."

Wordsworth saw little of the cherry-stone in Milton's sonnets. Shrill and high-sounding they thrill through the souls of those capable of receiving the afflation of the sound. In truth, Johnson's criticism is not to be received at all. The eighth and twenty-first, (so commended,) are really amongst the inferior. Let the reader turn to his edition of Milton, and judge for himself. Sir Egerton Brydges enters at length into the merits of Milton as a sonnetteer; and with his opinions, for the most part, we have a perfect sympathy. No one will claim for him the post of the Prince of sonnet-writers—that place must be awarded to Wordsworth alone. But even in the period at which he wrote, he did not reach the height of the models offered him from Italy. Mellifluousness he has none. His sonnets have a rugged spiritual grandeur: they rely upon some one sentiment for their effect: they have little of the pictorial of imagination: there is none of the pomp of language: a thought has to be uttered, and it must be uttered at once in a condensed lightning-stroke. Profound feeling is certainly the characteristic of them. Reflec-

tion for the most part, although one or two are glorious pieces of exalted declamation,—as for instance the magnificent Ode on the "Massacre in Piedmont;"—

"Avenge, oh Lord! thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold."

After all we suspect Johnson's political prejudices again; for most or many of the sonnets have a reference to his political views. Thus he was scarcely likely to relish that to Cromwell, and the closing apostrophe, noble as it is:

"Yet much remains
To conquer still: Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War: new foes arise
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw."

Sonnets are usually the productions of minds loving to revolve their own mental volitions. They are a colloquy with thought, and only used by those capable of intense reflection.—Perhaps it may be said that they have generally been the method by which the mind of genius has flung off its egotism. It is thus with Shakspear, Dante, Petrarch, Wordsworth: it was so with Milton. The finest allusions to himself are in the sonnets. The mind records

in them its solemn warnings, its holy joys. In that on his blindness :—

"When I consider how my light is spent."

the mind revolves upon what it might have performed, had the eyesight only been spared; what might have been done for God, but now it must be left undone. Instead of an active service, the body has to sit still: what then? immediately a clear steady lamp sheds its lustre through the soul. If God can not be glorified and honoured by performance, he can by patience; and patience is a kind of performance; the soul looks resolutely out through the darkness of the night.

"God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly: thousands, at his bidding, speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

How touching and deep is the consolation conveyed in the last line! How lovely the resignation of this great spirit! How truly had he learned the lesson which was the great one to be learned by the people of God in that time, when some had to wait in prison, and

some in the hopelessness of outcast poverty, and some upon the scaffold. Sometimes the consolation coming to his darkness was of another kind. He had not wasted the hours of his light: he had worked while it was day: the night had come, but it brought out for him the track of splendour: he had not to meditate upon wasted days, or promise amendment if restored to vision. No! and therefore a cheerful day brightens round the soul, and beneath the lustre of it he indites the sonnet to Cyriac Skinner.

"Cyriac, this three years' day these eyes, though clear
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot,
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heav'n's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me? dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overply'd
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain masque,
Content though blind, had I no better guide."

We will only cite one other illustration from these "Poor Sonnets," and this, the last, is

perhaps the most affecting. It is upon his best-beloved wife Catharine, the daughter of Captain Woodcock, of Hackney, a zealous Puritan. She died in child-bed, of a daughter, within a year of their marriage. The reader must not fail to notice the beautiful harmony of every portion of this exquisite piece. The allusion to Euripides, in the opening, is very fine. Milton had been long blind before this marriage. With great beauty, therefore, he represents "her face as veiled." He could have no conception of that face; but to him it appeared the presence of a beauty. His mind made pictures in his sleep, in dreams, and musings; and this was the day-time of his soul. What pathos does this lend to the last line?

"Methought I saw my late-espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heav'n without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.

But oh, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

We have now glanced together through these despised sonnets. They are by no means unworthy even of Milton. Probably most of them were written in the stray intervals of his employment as the secretary of the Protector. They are his occasional visits to Poetry in a period when his time was employed with more serious occupations. Probably not one is the result of methodic study. It may further be said, the sonnet never should be the result of the epic disposition of the mind. Good sonnets *can* only be written by poets who can achieve greater things; and they should hang upon their works "like dew-drops on a lion's mane."

CHAPTER XIII.

MILTON AND JOHNSON.

For a very long time the life of Milton most referred to, and most frequently reprinted, was that by Dr. Johnson, the most malevolent piece of Biography ever penned. The mis-state-

ments and falsehoods, tho errors of ignorance and of inference, lie over the pages so very thickly strewn, that in this way it is a perfect literary curiosity. There are trifling errors of judgment, to which some reply might be given: for instance, where he says that the products of Milton's vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Cowley never wrote so fine a poem as "The Hymn on the Nativity," in all his life. Milton was but about twenty when he penned it; but if the life were crowded with errors of no more moment than this, they would be too contemptible for any extended refutation: but it is the production of some of the basest moments of Johnson's life: he seems to revel in a kind of posthumous slander on this illustrious genius. He misses no opportunity of inuendo or abuse,—and is to Milton dead, what Salmasius was to Milton living. Thus he assails, by inuendo, the poet's College days, those days crowned by industry, and signalised by the products of genius.

"I am ashamed to relate, what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last of the students in either University, that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction." Todd, in his life of Milton, has sifted this allegation of

Johnson thoroughly. The flagellation of Milton, over which it is easy to perceive that Johnson chuckled, seems to be in fact what the tale of "The three Crows" is in fable. Every probability is against it: there is not a fact to support it. We may readily believe that some of Milton's foes would have gladly availed themselves of the report, especially More, Du Moulin, or Salmasius, had it been known during his life.

Upon this chapter, St. John remarks:—

"The Rev. Mr. Mitford and Sir Egerton Brydges admit, perhaps too readily, that Milton underwent what, in University cant, is termed 'rustication.' That he was expelled from College, or subjected to personal chastisement, no one now believes; nor was there ever a man, not wholly blinded by prejudice, who could seriously entertain the opinion. Johnson, supposing he was serving his party, by reviving and giving currency to the calumny, prefaces his fiction with affected reluctance and concern. 'I am ashamed to relate,' he says, 'what I fear is true—Milton was one of the last students in either University that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction.' If he really felt shame, it was because he feared, or rather was persuaded, that what he was about to say was

not true. This could have been his only apprehension. To have discovered some foundation for his slander would to him have been matter of joy and gratulation, not of sorrow. His pretended fear, therefore, was as hypocritical as his narrative is destitute of truth."

When Johnson remarks upon Milton's declining to enter the Church (and it is probable he did this from the same notion which led him from the University), he says—

"One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, was, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays—'writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trinculos, buffoons, and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry, which they had or were near having, to the eyes of the court ladies, their grooms, and mademoiselles.' This is sufficiently peevish in a man who, when he mentions his exile from College, relates with great luxuriance the compensations which the pleasures of the theatre afforded him. Plays were, therefore, only criminal when they were acted by academics."

What Johnson means by luxuriance in the passage just cited it is difficult to discover.

There is no passage in Milton's writings to warrant such a phrase.

"From all which the reader is required to infer neither more nor less than that Milton was a contemptible hypocrite. But the case stands thus: when he descanted on the pleasures of the theatre, 'with great luxuriance,' he was a youth, somewhere about eighteen; the 'Apology' was written between thirty and forty; in the interval, therefore, time and opportunity had been afforded him to correct his boyish notions of the theatre, had they been wrong. Suppose, however, he had all his life entertained a partiality for the stage, does it necessarily follow that he must behold with 'luxuriance' the ministers of Christ dishonouring their sacred calling by the personation of coarse and indecent characters? This is all he here blames, as Johnson might have discovered, had he read the passage with attention."

It is true that Milton refused to enter the ministry of the Church of England, because he could not subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles. "Whoever became a clergyman must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that could not retch, he must strait perjure himself." He thought it better to preserve a blameless

silence, rather than take upon himself the office of speaking—an office bought and begun with servitude and forswearing.

That is a wonderful error of Johnson, but a type of his whole Biography, in which he says, "Scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal," &c., &c.—which passage proves that he knew little of Milton's writings. No, there is no frugality in his praise. When did Johnson ever commend, without a large qualification?—Never, even when he spoke of the highest names. But Milton frugal indeed—

"What needs my Shakspear for his hallowed bones?"

How heartily he praises his great compeer! and Jonson's "learned sock," and Chaucer, who called up "the story of Cambuscan bold."—Sometimes names crowd upon him. "No time will ever abolish the agreeable recollections I cherish of Jacob Gaddi, Caroli Deodati, Frescobaldi Culbellero, Bonomatthai, Clementillo, Francisco, and others." Then he speaks, in his Areopagitica, "of our sage and serious poet, Spenser, whom I dare be bold to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas."

His works abound in praise of men of the

highest worth. It would detain the reader through a very long chapter, if all the falsehoods and sneers of Johnson were formally answered; for the life is lengthy, and these abound upon every page. The simplest event is not recorded without some implication. Passing over his loose method of speaking of Milton's visits to Lady Margaret Leigh, a married lady, the daughter of the Earl of Marlborough, with whom Milton occasionally conversed, and to whom he has inscribed a sonnet,—his changing his party, and leaving the Presbyterians for the Puritans—"He that changes his party by humour, is not more virtuous than he who changes it for interest."—The fact is, Milton changed his party because he did not choose to change his principles. He protested against the exorbitant pretensions of the Presbyterians. He found them inimical to liberty. "Presbyter" he found to be "priest writ large." There is a pre-eminently vile passage in reference to Milton's Latin secretaryship under Cromwell, after he had received much honour and some reward for writing his "Defence of the People of England." "Milton, having now tasted the honey of public employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but continued to exercise his office

under a magnificent usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just, than that he who had justified the murder of his king should now sell his services and his flatteries to a tyrant."

As to returning to hunger, it is not at all likely that Milton was ever in want, or that he accepted any office; from his difficulty in procuring bread, Johnson had starved (had honourably and nobly starved) for years, and escaped from the possibilities of hunger by accepting a pension from King George III., whom he believed to be a usurper or a descendant of one; the representative of a family he hated. Milton received very little honey; the £1000 with which he was to have been rewarded for writing the "Defence," it appears certain he never received; the salary he received as secretary was small, but the post was probably congenial to his taste; and republican, as he was, he had doubtless sense to perceive that Cromwell's so called "usurpation" was the only course open for him to take to save himself from the consequences of a worse despotism; Milton's life is an abundant refutation to the charge of desiring "the money of public employment." It rests on good grounds that

Milton was offered the post of Latin Secretary to Charles II., on the restoration or soon after; why not? Monk the traitor rose high to power; South, the renegade, became a king's chaplain; Waller, the renegade, a hanger on at Court. Charles loved to receive these convertites, but the honey of public employment could not tempt Milton; and while his wife pressed his compliance he said, "Thou art in the right; you as other women, would ride in your coach; for me, my aim is to live and to die an honest man." Johnson must laud the Stewarts; "The king upon his restoration" says he, "with a lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the avenger of his father's wrongs." Monstrous and most audacious falsehood; the land reeked for years with violence and blood, as a expiatory holocaust to the memory of the departed King;" but if the king were so lenient, why does Johnson sneer at Milton for skulking from the presence of the king. Oh! but this is excellent; while the doctor forgets that Charles had been for years skulking in a life of dissipated recklessness and uncleanness, accepting the pay of a foreign despot, the enemy to England, whether beneath a monarchy or a protectorate.—It is needless to pursue this topic further; it was an

evil hour in which Johnson undertook to write the life of Milton, or to criticise his poems; he could not understand the first, it was a virtue beyond his reach; so "high he could not attain to it," and no man ever believed in the existence of a virtue in another too lofty for his own attainment; as to poetry he was utterly unfitted to be a critic of it: a large heavy scrofulous body, short-sighted, narrow-minded, without enthusiasim or cheerfulness, what should he know of it? We love the old man in many of his moods, but the position in which we least like to see him, in which indeed we cannot tolerate him, is sitting down to write the Life of Milton.

CHAPTER XIV.

MILTON'S SATAN.

If we would read the mental and moral life of great poets, we should carefully study the leading character of their writings. We shall be sure to find their history written *there*. All poets in their writings sketch themselves,—it cannot be otherwise; their mightiest characters

do as they would do; of course, it needs not to be said, that the character sketched most entirely, by Milton, is Satan; the power associated with that being is terrible; he is the prime actor in "Paradise Lost," and he moves with fearful energy. Where he moves through the poem, the human characters are passive to his power; the angelic are only foils to set off that power, and there is an indistinctness in the impersonation of the divine beings most grateful to our feelings, but at the same time unfavourable to the due balancing of that tremendous lordship which Satan asserts over our imaginations throughout the whole of the book. But the character of Satan,—does this harmonise with our moral feelings of what such a character should be? Our readers will remember a passage in one of Burns's letters: "I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage SATAN." Unquestionably this is the predominant impression produced on the mind; throughout the poem, Satan fascinates us irresistibly; as soon as he

speaks, he declares himself; although struck down, yet unconquered.

> "What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost; the unconquerable will
> And study of revenge, immortal hate
> And courage never to submit or yield,
> And what is else not to be overcome."

He bears up, although racked with deep despair, and answers the fears of more timid comrades:

> "Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable
> Doing or suffering."

And when the sulphurous hail had laid the fiery surge, and the thunder, winged with red lightning, ceases to bellow through the vast and boundless deep, and the revelation of the world to which he is consigned is made—

> "Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
> That comes to all, but torture without end;"

while the flames, on each side, slope their pointing spires, and, rolling in billows, leave in the midst a horrid vale. In the midst of this mournful gloom he continues still undaunted, —he casts his last look on heaven and all its

happiness,—he exhibits no remorse, but rather exultancy and triumph :—

> " Farewell, happy fields,
> Where joy for ever dwells ! Hail, horrors; hail
> Infernal world ! and thou profoundest hell
> Receive thy new possessor; one who brings
> A mind not to be changed by place or time.
> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
> What matter where, if I be still the same.
> Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice,
> To reign is worth ambition, tho' in hell:—
> Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

And when the new creation is won, through that terrible journey he undertook through the realms of chaos and the limbo of vanity ; when from regions so dreadful, escaped once more to the strange beauty of the new creation, and the spectacle of the full splendour of the sun beheld for the first time, recalls him to a sense of his own darkness, and long eternity of terror,—then gushes forth that terrible and passionate soliloquy:—

> " Me miserable! Which way shall I fly.
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair !
> Which way I fly is hell ; myself am hell ;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep,

> Still threatening to devour me, opens wide;
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.
> Oh then, at last, relent."

No, pride, stout, stubborn pride, forbids that submission, and

> "So farewell hope; and with hope, farewell fear;
> Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost;—
> Evil be thou my good!"

These citations present the portrait of Satan; it is a portrait of evil, which awes us, but does not satisfy us; it is too fearfully objective.—We feel that this nobleness of evil does not belong to it,—it is a colouring caught from the poet's own mind; it illustrates our first thought, that in painting Satan, the poet painted himself: this sublime and daring determination was a portion of his soul,—that sublime resolution, undaunted, defiant of the bellowing thunder, the surging fires, and the swift, fierce lightnings, was but the painting of the reality with which Milton himself went forth to encounter the terrible hurricanes of life. We have had other pictures of the impersonated Evil;—and amongst them, especially, Goethe's Mephistophiles;—but in every point, how different! This being excites no sympathy—he

has none. Satan, on the contrary, possesses sympathy, and communicates it. Mephistophiles is cold and passionless; Satan, on the contrary, glows with passionate vehemence. Of course, Mephistophiles neither hates nor loves. The hatred of Satan is intense; his love for something, therefore, must be proportioned to his hatred. And here too, we may remark, how perfectly Goethe, in his portrait of Mephistophiles, painted himself,—cold, being far removed from human sympathies, and loves, and passions; to whom life, with all its solemn realities, was no other,—no more,—than the picture in his study; in fact, to Goethe, the evil principle was a mere shadow,—a terrible necessity of our being,—a negation, not a real existence. Not so Milton; his Satan stands there living—real—the being that did—

"Defy the Omnipotent to arms."

The portraits of the two men are here. The one sitting in his study now anatomising a fly, now dissecting a beam of light,—while Europe around him was in a paroxysm and an agony, while every day would have brought to his door the wail of oppressed people, or the yell of disappointed tyrannies; the other meditating

his poem in the closing years of his life; a life spent with men, the greatest Statesmen of any age or nation, in defying, for the interests of Liberty and Humanity, the cruel and boundless ambition of princes and prelates. Sitting there in his study, fallen on evil days and evil tongues, but with a memory crowded with great recollections of work for the world, well done; a blind martyr to his own unflinching attachment to truth and freedom. Now it is in these characteristics of his great life that we are to look for the central idea of Satan. It is not too much to say this is the finest conception in the whole realm of poetry; nothing is like it; nowhere do we find the sublime feelings protracted to such unusual length; in no other page can we tolerate supernatural intervention. Gods and demons are perpetually doing things befitting neither God nor Devil to do here; we seem to be admitted to the mysteries of the infernal and the celestial world. Milton does not discourse to us of the origin of evil; he does not show us how it came first to be known in the world. Of course it is easy with Goethe or Philip Bailey to speak of it as a necessity—and we can now very well understand that evil is a law of our being; that that law is overlawed; and that now absolute evil does not exist in the

world; that it has its own limitations, and that eventually it results in abundant happiness. All this is easy to see and to say; but the thought yet meets us as it ever will, that evil, even as a means of education and discipline, appears to our poor minds far from the purity and the goodness of the Divine nature: but this terrible antagonism to the Infinite Supreme, this magnificent but perverse will, surely this is the height of evil; and where did Milton obtain this wonderful conception of Satan? Not from the theology of his own time, nor indeed the theology of any time. The hints thrown out in the Sacred writings are dim, vague, shadowy, but these were the foundation of this great structure. Let the reader think of the indistinctness of these hints, and the fully described collossal proportions of our poet's awful hero, and the wonder becomes miraculous. We must seek for our author's ideas of the birth of sin in the extraordinary episode which so many critics have quarrelled with, as objectional in the erection of the poem. Sin is born of presumptuous intelligence. Satan is the portrait of intellect without a God; and our readers will remember the parentage claimed by the portress of Hell Gate.

"Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eyes so foul? once deem'd so fair
In Heav'n, when at th' assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combined
In bold conspiracy against Heav'ns King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surprised thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swam
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,
Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
Then shining heavn'ly fair, a goddess arm'd
Out of thy head I sprung; amazement seized
All th' host of Heav'n; back they recoil'd, afraid
At first, and call'd me Sin, and for a sign
Portentous held me; but familiar grown
I pleased, and with attractive graces won
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing
Becam'st enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st
With me in secret, that my womb conceived
A growing burthen."

And when the weird mother gave birth to that child, says she:—

"I fled and cried out, DEATH!
Hell trembled at the hideous name and sigh'd
From all her caves, and back resounded DEATH!"

Thus Satan had plucked of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, before he offered it to our parents, and thus he began to sin. The allegory very finely illustrates to us that all evil has its

origin in debate with God. The happiest life is that which gives the most unquestioning obedience: there all is affirmation but no conviction; then comes the departure from conviction, then the everlasting negation; all is unhappy. Satan is the devil of the intellect, as Comus is the devil of the sense: they are both sophists. Satan imposes his sophisms on the intellect, and the reason, dealing in the subtleties of metaphysical speculation. Comus imposes his upon the senses and understanding, and deals in the forms that charm the imagination and the taste. It surely was not without intention that Milton portrays to us, upon the breaking up of the council of Pandemonium, the various occupations of the Lost. These were all in some measure transcripts of their great chief. They range themselves into six groups. There are the Demons of PLEASURE, who glide through the whirl of mimic battle, curbing the fiery steeds; and even in the dire scenery of the place of doom, they prick forth to aery tournaments. Next to these are the demons of AMBITION, rending Hell's rocks, and riding the fiery air as on a whirlwind, so that Hell scarce holds the wild uproar: then the demons of VANITY, retreating to a silent valley, struck their harps with angelic notes to the fame of their own

achievements, and the demons of the INTELLECT, meantime, in dignified pre-eminence of place—

> "Others apart sat on a hill retired,
> In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
> Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
> And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.
> Of good and evil much they argued then,
> Of happiness and final misery,
> Passion and apathy, glory and shame,
> Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy;
> Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm
> Pain for a while, or anguish, and excite
> Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdured breast
> With stubborn patience, as with triple steel;"

while another squadron rushed forth on bold adventure through many a dark and many a dreary vale, where "parching air burns frore," and cold performs the effect of fire. This classification was not without intention surely. These may be described as the higher and inferior orders of spirits; and those, it will be observed, whose character we have cited, are doubtless introduced to assure us how possible it is to reason upon the profoundest topics, and those most intimately connected with the Diviner thoughts and things, and yet from these very things to find only the occasions of intellectual sin. It is the intellectual, the internal character of Satan,

which makes him an object of profound interest. To us every proportion of physical majesty, if this term may be applied to so spiritual a being, shrinks into insignificance when we turn our eyes to the vehement passion, the terrible consciousness of ever-corroding misery, the wonderful knowledge of the most intricate intellecual machinery, which the Evil Spirit shows.

And, if the sentiments of Satan are great and swelling, worthy of a being so terrible, so also, his exterior is presented to us in every combination of grandeur and magnificence. He appears, though fallen so low, not less than archangel ruined; he is a sun seen dimly through the horizontal misty air, shorn of his beams; his face is lacerated with no common wounds: deep scars of thunder are entrenched there,—a scathed oak upon a blasted heath. If he is painted sailing at a distance, he seems to the eye like a fleet hanging upon the clouds.—If he stands motionless, he burns like a comet,

> "That fires the length of Ophiucus huge
> In the Arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
> Shakes pestilence and war:"

or, when he dares the vast vacuity of chaos, and swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or

flies amidst the hollow dark, his wings are as sail-broad fans; he rises audacious, as in a cloudy chair; and, in the surging smoke uplifted, spurns the ground: and when he escapes from the "palpable obscure," he springs upward like a pyramid of fire. All these are tremendous figures. The fancy labours after them, in vain, to reach the grandeur of which the poet presents the outline. All the conceptions have the most awful boldness. When he appears before us first, "prone on the flood," he is even like some night-foundered skiff upon the Norway foam: and, when he strides over the burning marl of Hell, he moves before us so mighty, that his spear shews "the tallest pine, hewn on Norwegian hills," only like a wand by its side. When he enters Eden, he creeps along like a low black mist; and when he tempts Eve in the form of a serpent, with what life and magnificence does the terrible, yet magnificent creature rise before our eyes!

"Not with indented wave
Prone on the ground, as since; but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that towered
Fold above fold, a surging maze! his head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes
With burnish'd neck of verdant gold, erect
Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass
Floated redundant: pleasing was his shape

And lovely; never since of serpent kind
Lovelier.
With track oblique
At first as one who sought access, but feared
To interrupt, sidelong he works his way;
As when a ship, by skilful steersman wrought
Nigh river's mouth or foreland, when the wind
Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail,
So varied he, and of his tortuous train
Curl'd many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,
To lure her eye: she busy'd, heard the sound
Of rustling leaves, but minded not, as used
To such disport before her through the field
From ev'ry beast; more duteous at her call
Than at Circean call the herd disguised.
He bolder now, uncall'd, before her stood;
But as in gaze admiring, oft he bow'd
His turret crest and sleek enamell'd neck,
Fawning, and lick'd the ground whereon she trod."

These figures all present Satan before us, in whatever attitude, most stupendous in his proportions. The mind of the reader is constantly on the stretch; and although some critics may take exception to the monstrous proportions of the Lost One's greatness, every careful reader must find a healthful and vigorous exercise in this perpetual presentation of sublime objects combined with such moral analogies. Thus we find how constantly Milton's mind was crowded with the sublimest objects. Size, and dimension appear to have most impressed him.

His imagination we can readily conceive would have been disappointed by scenes which would afford to ordinary minds the most ineffable delight. Most of the great things at which men would wonder, would present no especial attraction to him. We can conceive him feasting far more readily upon the exceedingly minute than the strangely vast. To the last his mind would more readily move, and find little unanticipated. To the former the mind would turn, not as to relaxation and rest, but to find her impressions and ideas, her territories of knowledge, her objects for the microscopic glass of the bolder power.

Another illustration of this power of protracted sublimity, in which Milton abounded, may be found in the fact, that frequently the poems are images in themselves. Particular after particular is added; every one heightening the appropriateness of the figure. Thus, when Satan first upon his escape from chaos, beholds our globe far off, upon the very outskirts of the solar system, when he walked at large, as in a spacious field, through the Limbo of Vanity;

"As when a vulture on Imaus bred
Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
Dislodging from a region scarce of prey
To gorge the flesh of lambs or yeanling kids

On hills where flocks are fed, flies toward the springs
Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams;
But in his way lights on the barren plains
Of Sericana, where Chineses drive
With sails and wind their cany waggons light:
So on this windy sea of land, the Fiend
Walk'd up and down alone, bent on his prey:
Alone; for other creature in this place,
Living or lifeless, to be found was none."

Again, when escaped from the Limbo of Vanity, he looks down for the first time through the innumerable hosts of stars and the pure marble air, and beholds the world, suddenly and at once the figure changes,—

"As when a scout
Through dark and desert ways, with peril gone
All night: at last, by break of cheerful dawn
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,
Which, to his eye, discovers unaware
The goodly prospect of some foreign land
First seen, or some renown'd metropolis,
With glist'ring spires and pinnacles adorn'd,
Which now the rising Sun gilds with his beams:
Such wonder seized, though after Heaven seen,
The Spirit malign, but much more envy seized,
At sight of all this world beheld so fair."

Yet again, when he approaches the Garden of Eden, and all the vernal gales blow round him, and odoriferous wings dispense perfumes and balms—

"As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambique, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabean odours from the spicy shore
Of Araby the Blest; with such delay
Well pleased they slack their course, and many a league
Cheer'd with the grateful smell, old Ocean smiles:
So entertain'd these odorous sweets the Fiend
Who came their bane."

And yet, once more, another figure. When still nearer to the garden he bounded over the enclosure, overleaped the hill and highest wall,

"As when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve,
In hurdled cots amid the field secure,
Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold:
Or as a thief bent to unhoard the cash
Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
Cross-barr'd and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles:
So clomb this first grand thief into God's fold;
So since into his church lewd hirelings climb.
Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life,
The middle tree and highest there that grew
Sat like a cormorant."

Now is not each of these citations a separate poem, rich, "simple, sensuous, passionate?" Let the reader not fail to notice how admirably the figure changes to the place and pursuit of the

fiend. Sir Egerton Brydges has said, "Milton possesses too much condensation to be fluent;" this may be remarked to whatever page of his great writings we turn: every phrase contains some new idea, some touch indispensable either to the proper conduct of the story or the figure. We find in every phrase, something which, either by its diction, or its arguments, or its description, is so copious, that it demands, before we go on, a meditation and an expansion. This being, Satan, we are loth to leave: strongly is the sympathy excited for that

> "THIRD of regal port,
> But faded splendour wan."

Could we, by the most elaborate and copious heaping of language, more clearly have presented to us the princely figure of the lost Archangel?

Do what we will, we cannot but pity; care and woe sit upon that blasted brow, that figure smitten in its pride—faded, wan; not like things that have used all their power, and show how near they are to death, but like a crag thunder-split, and wearing on its height the evidence of its grandeur, in that it could from its elevation, court the bolt and the lightning stroke; an oak, scorched in its manhood; a

stately column left to solitude and loneliness by the flame, before Time had touched it with his finger. These may best illustrate that line; but how proudly, how nobly it stands there by itself; how little the material image helps us in our effort to understand the spiritual pity—pity for Satan! How soon that sentiment fades from us as we continue to gaze! It was a sentiment allied to compassion for a fallen monarch—a sentiment similar to that with which you may conceive Milton himself regarding Charles, as he passed from his judgment in Westminster Hall, but that is soon repelled; soon—and in its stead, terror starts up in the soul, when

> "Satan alarmed,
> Collecting all his might, dilating stood
> Like Tenneriffe or Atlas, unremoved;
> His stature reached the sky, and on his crest
> Sat horror plumed."

There is immense difference in the various presentations of Satan. Some critics have argued, that the grandeur of the character carries too completely the sympathies of the leader with the rebel Archangel; but surely this results from a superficial judgment and perusal of the poem. In truth, this most

majestic of beings is, as he should be, also the meanest. We are in danger when two angels rise in Pandemonium from their consultation, and we hear their rising all at once, as the sound of thunder heard remote, as they, with awful reverence prone, bend towards him as a god. There is danger, lest, before such vehement eloquence, such bold and hazardous daring, such dauntless resolution, we yield too much homage; nor is our admiration much diminished, as we behold him through the vast profound,

> "The dark unbottomed infinite abyss,"

like a griffin, half flying, half on foot,

> "O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or lare,
> With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursue his way."

But the poet has, with the touch of genius, contrived to give to the fiend the first appearance of contemptible employment, and when we behold him

> "Squat, like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,"

surely this redeems us from our fallen homage. This toad, the prince of many throned powers!

and of all disguises in this ! We remembered his enterprise, as we beheld him doffing the darkness of the lost angel, putting on the coronet, and "the wings of many coloured plumes sprinkled with gold," to impose on Uriel. Thus we learn that Satan was "a liar from the beginning." But how strikingly has the poet, true to the spirit of the Sacred History, combined the utmost vileness with this magnanimous outlawry .The fallen angel wraps himself in the semblance of the toad, that there should be only a step from the rebel prince to the reptile. This is a noble stroke for the imagination ; it relieves us from those false sympathies in which we had too precipitately indulged ; and when the final act of perfidy is performed, the consciousness of meanness, which it adds to the natural dignity of the plotting fiend, places him still farther from our sympathies.

> "Oh, foul descent ! that, I who erst contended,
> With gods to sit the highest, are now constrained
> Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime."

Every circumstance conspires to make this being mean and dastardly to our eyes ; gradually our ardent admiration cools, till when

Nature feels the wound, and gives signs of woe, that all is lost, while

> "Back, to the thicket slunk
> The guilty serpent,"

we hate more passionately but more wisely, than we admired; we exult, as the unexpected and applauding hiss greets the achievement in Pandemonium, and the fiend becomes the reptile he similated.

CHAPTER XV.

PARADISE LOST.

But we will devote a little more time to this wonderful poem, and to the observation of some of its more obvious beauties. It is understood that we write for the young, and that we write to aid them to perceive and to enjoy the pictures and raptures of the imagination. One of the difficulties, and the greatest the poet had to contend with, was the description of the Spiritual world and its inhabitants; Heaven, Hell,

Angels, Demons; and he has poured over each subject the utmost affluence of language and poetry. Let the reader pause over the following description of the occupations of Heaven:—

"No sooner had th' Almighty ceased, but all
The multitude of angels, with a shout
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, utt'ring joy, Heav'n rung
With jubilee, and loud Hosannas fill'd
Th' eternal regions: lowly reverent
Tow'rds either throne they bow, and to the ground
With solemn adoration down they cast
Their crowns, inwove with amarant and gold;
Immortal amarant; a flow'r which once
In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
Began to bloom; but soon, for man's offence,
To Heav'n removed, where first it grew, there grows,
And flow'rs aloft, shading the fount of life,
And where the riv'r of bliss through midst of Heav'n
Rolls o'er Elysian flow'rs her amber stream;
With these, that never fade, the spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks inwreath'd with beams,
Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the bright
Pavement, that like a sea of jasper shone,
Impurpled with celestial roses smiled.
Then crown'd again, their golden harps they took,
Harps ever tuned, that glitt'ring by their side
Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet
Of charming symphony they introduce
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high;
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join
Melodious part,—such concord is in Heav'n."

The design of Paradise Lost is the most superhuman that ever filled the mind of a poet; the design of every other mighty epic looks tame when compared with it. Homer only narrates how cities were thrown into convulsion and war, on account of a harlot; and the Æneid only grows out of the same conception. Dante certainly could never have laid the plan of such a poem; Tasso is the great epic poet of modern times. But in all these instances the plan of the poet was laid on earth, or if, as in the case of Dante; the scenery was in another world, yet the characters and the allusions were of the events of earth and time: but Milton set his genius to work upon a world all spirit;—for surely a world without sin, a world plunged strangely into sin by some mysterious wrenching from the dominion of the Divine law and purity, may be included in such a generalization. There were no precedents for such a plan. The gods of Homer were the transcripts of impure imaginations only; the heroes of the Æneid were mortal and imperfect. Shakspear, in his "Troilus and Cressida," had held up the seige of Troy and all the Trojan warriors to a well deserved scorn; he had lashed them with his powerful dramatic satire, and had made the occasion of their contests simply ridiculous;

and doubtless in this light it was regarded by Milton. The supernatural machinery of the "Jerusalem Delivered" was worthy of the Gothic Mythology; it was worthy of the age in which it was written; more cannot be said of it. But Milton chose a subject for an epic, without a parallel in literature,—the cause of moral evil in the world. The occasion of those terrible discrepancies, which all may observe between the thing that is, and the thing that ought to be, this was the subject he proposed to himself; it involved every possible kind of poetry to describe spirits, to delineate the course of events would include dramatic character and action; and what a field for sublime speculation! and what a theatre for the choral harmonies of the Blest, and the dissonances of the Lost, and all nature, and all the spiritual world outspread for description and dissertation! Let the reader sit down but a short time, and think what requisites were necessary before even the canvass could be spread to receive a design so vast as this, and he will be amazed. The demand was no less than that every kind of learning should pour its ample store throughout the poem. The diction, too,—how necessary that it should not be so mellifluous, as weighty, to bear up the grandeur of the theme; not the volatility of

Italy or of France; not the case of Rome or Greece. Did not the subject demand a language of its own, and such a language has Milton fabricated! Again let the reader think, this is not the language of Chaucer, homely Saxon father that he was; still less is it that of Spenser so quaint, grotesque, fantastic—a piece of gabled architecture. It is not that of Shakspear—lively, full, flowing, various Milton's language in Paradise Lost is the very arabesque and mosaic of languages,—is a tapestry woven, like his mind, of thick massive texture from the products of every mind upon the globe. How heavily this majestic ocean of language rolls and beats to and fro as it obeys the impulse of the master mind. Can any thing be conceived more appropriate to the theme? Let us cite a few illustrations of what we may term the mosaic of Milton's ideas. Let the reader notice the strength of the following lines, premising always that they are no special selections; that the poem abounds with them; that their perpetual recurrence is a part of its structure—greatness.

"The sulphurous hail,
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
The fiery surge, that from the precipice
Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,

Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow thro' the vast and boundless deep."

Is not the last line itself like the closing climax of a thunder peal? Or again, what sonorousness in the following lines, the action and the sound! Were they ever heard together in such perfect harmony? How the mind is stirred to the whole chivalry of the scene by that one line "Clash'd on their sounding shields."

"He spake and to confirm his words out flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim: the sudden blaze
Far round illumined Hell; highly they raged
Against the highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war
Hurling defiance 'gainst the hosts of Heaven."

This is one of the great requisites of poetry. It is for this purpose that in all ages, rhythm, or the measured march of words, has been employed though the rhythm can never alone constitute poetry. It is the soul that informs this sense of hearing, and gives the impression of a lofty sound to a most lofty action or sentiment. What an illustration of this we have in the uprearing of the infernal banner; we catch the rustling of its massive folds; its gorgeousness is dimly seen,

et off however by the fitful gleaming of the piral pointed flames.

"Azazel, as his right, a cherub tall
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
Th' imperial ensign which full high advanc'd,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed,
Seraphic arms and trophies; all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds:
At which the universal host up-sent
A shout, that tore hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
With orient colours waving: with them rose
A forest huge of spears; and thronging helms
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable: anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders."

Nor may we omit to notice the exquisite beauty of colouring with which all the varied books of the poem teem. Although often quoted, we will yet read them together here.—The description of Evening:—

"Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied,—for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;

She all night long her am'rous descant sung;
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires: Hesperus that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."

And what favourites are some of these descriptions: their solemnity sways the spirit; we can never too often repeat them; they are ever fresh. That sublime discourse put into the mouth of Adam, upon man's nearness to the spiritual world, we quote; we treasure it in our hearts as well as our memories. We long to believe the doctrine of it, that the angels are not far from us—that they sometimes cross our path. We retain in our spirits some hints of our kindred to the world of souls; and by ourselves at night, in silence, or by the bed of death, or in the gloomy solitude in the day time, we find ourselves repeating—

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep:
And these with ceaseless praise His works behold,
Both day and night. How often from the steep
Of echoing hill, or thicket, have we heard
Celestial voices in the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive to each other's note,
Singing their great Creator! oft in bands,

While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds
In full harmonious number joined, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heaven."

Who does not love to read some of those lines, which blow to us, as on a gale, the freshness of the morning!

"Now Morn, her rosy steps in th' Eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with Orient pearl."

And that invocation to arise from slumber—

"Awake—the morning shines, and the fresh field
Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
Our tended plants, how blows the citron grove,
What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed;
How Nature paints her colours, how this bee
Sits on the bloom, extracting liquid sweet."

This poetry, rich, delightful, accessible to the understanding, we would wish to find its way to the home of most persons into whose hands this book may chance to come. But there are other things more intrinsically magnificent. Let the reader look at the places described. What a sublime horror hangs over the infernal world! Did light and shade ever meet in this dreadful unison before? "A scene as though Switzerland were set on fire,"

says George Gilfillan. Yes! that is the picture,—and it is only by such an image before the eye that the reader can ever dimly realise this dreadful world. The awful plain prepared by Almighty vengeance is girt with vast and horrid rocks; we hear the rush of fiery streams; and far off, on peak beyond peak, we catch the dim trembling of the vivid lightning; there is no light in this world; there is no darkness,—it is "darkness visible."

> "A dungeon, horrible on all sides round,
> As one great furnace flamed;
> Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never come."

The imagination diffuses itself over a world yet lying beyond the immediate theatre of action—a world of alternate frost and fire. Infernal Heclas—vast and wide. Away we are borne on through the latitudes and longitudes of Hell.

> "Rocks, caves, lakes, seas, bogs, dens, and shades of death;
> A universe of death,
> Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds
> Perverse."

A territory unpeopled. Alas! all the scheme of the poem turns upon those damned agencies

by which the world of horror and of woe should be crowded with victims. Upon a hill, a grizly and volcanic cone, rich in precious metals, rises the Palace Chamber, the Council Hall, the Valhalla of these lost spirits. The terrible Pandemonium;—thither, where enwombed lay the heaps of gold, and silver, Mammon led the way. The hill opened out its ribs, the solid gold is dug.

"Let none admire
That riches grow in Hell; that soil may best
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,
And strength, and art, are easily outdone
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they with incessant toil
And hands innumerable scarce perform.
Nigh on the plain in many cells prepared,
That underneath had veins of liquid fire
Sluiced from the lake, a second multitude
With wond'rous art founded the massy ore,
Severing each kind, and scumm'd the bullion dross;
A third as soon had form'd within the ground
A various mould, and from the boiling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an organ, from one blast of wind,
To many a row of pipes, the sound-board breathes.
Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound

Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did they want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures grav'n:
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equall'd in all their glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury. Th' ascending pile
Stood fix'd her stately height; and straight the doors,
Op'ning their brazen folds, discover wide
Within her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
And level pavement. From the arched roof,
Pendant by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naptha and asphaltas, yielded light
As from a sky."

From Pandemonium we fly to Paradise; and as every figure in the description of Hell heightens some previous horror, and adds to the weight of some already oppressing sense of woe, so in Eden every image heightens our idea of enjoyment; all is Oriental and wild. The space is not so vast as that of Hell; it is locked in by careful enclosures; and here there are but two inhabitants, and those to be soon banished; while the population of Hell, already immense, is to increase with the roll of ages. But Eden—it is a wilderness of beauty; what

a perfect opulence of sweets! the trim hand of civilization has never touched these gardens.

"Thus was this place
A happy rural seat of various view;
Groves whose rich trees wept od'rous gums and balm,
Others whose fruit burnish'd with golden rind
Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true.
If true, here only, and of delicious taste,
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed,
Or palmy hillock; or the flow'ry lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store;
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose:
Another side, umbrageous grots and caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant: meanwhile murm'ring waters fall
Down the slope hills, dispersed, or in a lake,
That to the fringed bank with myrtle crown'd
Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
The birds their choir apply; air, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,
Led on th' eternal spring, Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gath'ring flow'rs,
Herself the fairest flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world; nor that sweet grove
Of Daphne by Orontes, and th' inspired
Castalian spring, might with this Paradise
Of Eden strive."

Now is there not rich work here for the dilating and delighted fancy? This beauty relieved and set off by the shaggy hill through which the river winds its way, the crisped brook rolling by sands of gold, from sapphire founts. Ah! what a spot is this! with that nuptial bower, showering down roses on the sleeping lovers,—the green bank, by that smooth lake, where Eve first beheld her reflected form,—that sylvan lodge,—deep forests, undesecrated by sin or shame, and peopled by birds of glorious plumage—this is Eden.

And then the characters of the poem of Satan;—we have said something, and would willingly say more, but that space forbids our doing so. We have then other spirits beside Satan—celestial and infernal; the latter appear before us in the discussions in council in Pandemonium, in full length. We notice their relative stature, and with what excited interest we are compelled to listen to their separate advices. What study of character is here! do they not ever speak like spirits? We feel that the poet has impersonated character and sentiment; yes, there are the gods men have worshipped, for in all ages men have bowed before, and paid homage to, abstract images of themselves. Men, the very copy of these lost spirits.

ranged round the banner of Charles, and round the council board of Cromwell. How we identify Prince Rupert with Moloch, frowning, whose look denounced desperate revenge and battle dangerous, rash, precipitate, reckless of his cause, mindful only of revenge. We always think of the stern and designing Strafford in the portrait of Beelzebub.

> "With grave
> Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed
> A pillar of state: deep on his front engraven,
> Deliberation sate, and public care;
> And princely counsel in his face yet shown
> Majestic, though in ruin."

Did Milton behold Strafford on his trial in Westminster Hall? Probably he did: certainly the prime minister of Satan, and of Charles answer to each other in character. We do not wish to pursue this thought. Those were times of extraordinary men, and Milton sketched the portraits of extraordinary spirits: how probable that he should have seized the likenesses suggested from prominency of character, and given them to his prime actors. Satan, we have seen, is indeed the portrait of himself; But the *physique* of that terrible being,—who does not see that it was next to impossible not

to find the haughty genius of Cromwell, his co-mate in council,—the most extraordinary genius of military conquest and executive legislation the world had known, filling his soul with a vast and magnificent shadow of what such a being might be in the exercise of purely spiritual power.

We have spoken of the persons and characters of these lost beings as sublime; the sentiments they utter are in keeping with the sublimity of their persons. We shiver as Moloch assures us—

> "that by proof we feel
> Our power sufficient to disturb his heaven,
> And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
> Tho' inaccessible, his fatal throne;
> Which if not victory, is yet revenge."

But that succeeding most rivets our attention. We are fascinated by the graceful Epicureanism (if that term may be allowed), of Belial, and his solemn reply to Moloch, who, to obtain revenge, would rush upon his own annihilation—

> "And that must end us; that must be our cure—
> To be no more? Sad cure; for who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,

To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion?"

And those magnificent words of Mammon on the residence of the Deity—

"How oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark, doth Heaven's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscured,
And with the majesty of darkness round
Covers his throne; from whence deep thunders roar,
Must'ring their rage, and Heaven resembles Hell.
As he our darkness, cannot we his light
Imitate when we please?"

The character of the celestial spirits is not so strikingly marked as that of the infernal; and this is a beauty of the work: they are moving in harmony with the law of the universe and of God: their character is distinct, and might even be made the subject of commentary.

We should like to make some remarks upon our first parents—upon their psychological character—upon their physical aspect. How noble the description of Adam!

"in himself was all his state,
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits

On princes, when their rich retinue long
Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold,
Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape."

How long we might loiter talking with angels, and winding our way through these groves of wonderful beauty.

There is, however, yet another section of observation open to us, and a wonderful and fruitful one—the Episodes of "Paradise Lost." The voyage of Satan through chaos, is such an episode, that some critics have objected to its introduction into an epic, especially Addison. But what shall we say to the terrible allegory of Sin and Death? Some have objected, that the conception of such personages is imaginary. Every personage in the poem is imaginary, except our two first parents. How fearfully has the poet preserved the portrait of Death:—

"The other shape,
If shape it may be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance, might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either; black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart. What seem'd his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

And, when Sin from her side takes the fatal

key, sad instrument of all our woe, and Satan looks forth into chaos—"the womb of Nature, and perhaps her grave,"—as the gates roll back, but not to shut again, who does not feel in how fine a spirit of fearful truth—of poetry—this is conceived; and the allegory is concluded in a still more lofty strain. When, after the fall, Milton represents Sin and Death as building a bridge over chaos to the world, to subdue and enslave mankind—

> "They with speed
> Their course through thickest constellations held
> Spreading their bane; the blasted stars looked wan
> And planet, planet-struck, real eclipse
> Then suffered."

The other great episode of the poem is the progress of Satan through the Limbo of Vanity: this has been extravagantly censured by some critics, as a departure from epical dignity. This limbo is represented as lying beneath chaos, beyond the outskirts of the globe—a sort of purgatory, of—

> "All things vain, and all who in vain things
> Built their fond hopes of glory."

This place the poet styles the Paradise of Fools. —Hither they come,—

"Embryos and idiots, eremites and friars
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.
Here pilgrims roam, that stray'd so far to seek,
In Golgotha, Him dead, who lives in Heav'n;
And they who, to be sure of Paradise,
Dying put on the weeds of Dominic,
Or in Franciscan think to pass disguised:
They pass the planets sev'n, and pass the fix'd,
And that crystalline sphere whose balance weighs
The trepidation talk'd, and that first moved;
And now Saint Peter at Heav'n's wicket seems
To wait them with his keys, and now at foot
Of Heav'n's ascent they lift their feet, when lo!
A violent cross wind from either coast
Blows them transverse ten thousand leagues awry
Into the devious air; then might ye see
Cowls, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, tost
And flutter'd into rags; then reliques, beads,
Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
The sport of winds: all these upwhirl'd aloft
Fly o'er the backside of the world far off
Into a Limbo large and broad, since call'd
The Paradise of Fools, to few unknown
Long after, now unpeopled, and untrod."

Is this a work of supererogation, in which we have been engaged? Was there no need to point out these characteristics of this immortal poem? For the student certainly not; but as this is intended for a pocket volume, to guide the youthful reader to a more intimate acquaintance with this great man, we believe it will not have been a vain task, in thus spreading

before the mind the most striking points to which the reader's attention may be directed.

CHAPTER XVI.

PARADISE REGAINED.

Some persons have affected to think the "Paradise Regained" a superior poem to "Paradise Lost." Such a taste, if it have any reality, can only result from an utter inferiority of perception—a lack of imagination, disqualifying all its possessors for the pronouncing of a verdict upon any matters of taste. No! in the "Paradise Regained" we miss all the magnitude that oppressed us in its predecessor. We have neither Hell, Heaven, nor Eden,—with the appalling horrors of the one, and the luxuries of the others. The poem is cast in altogether another mould: it is excellent, most excellent. But if the work of a poem is to be measured by its extraordinary invention—by its long-drawn and highly-animated sublimity—by the vivid colouring in which its actions and scenery

are presented, then there can be no comparison between the poems. We look in vain for the utterances of sombre grandeur in which the lost angels indulge. There is no Pandemonium to build; no Limbo of Vanity to plunge through; no bridge to be thrown over Chaos. Satan has been so long winding through the vortexes of guilt, that he appears altogether another character than that bold defiant spirit, who

> "on a throne of regal state, that far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind,
> . . . exalted sate."

How different his first presentment to us now:—

> "An aged man in rural weeds,
> Following, as seemed, the quest of some stray ewe,
> Or withered sticks to gather, which might serve
> Against a winter's day, when winds blow keen,
> To warm him, wet returned from field at eve."

And the introduction of Satan is typical of the whole poem. It is a subdued, yet probably a more earnest performance, and scarcely inferior to "Paradise Lost" in instruction; but it bears a nearer relation to prose; philosophy and history are less concealed in allusion to figure. In

"Paradise Regained," Satan appears before us in council again, but his form and the discourses of his co-mates have lost all their original brightness. Belial sinks into the mere sensualist, very different from the lofty but egotistic intellectualism to which we listened upon another great occasion. But if this production of Milton is inferior to "Paradise Lost." it is not wanting in poetry and fancy abundantly sufficient to immortalise an humbler bard. It has more nakedness of character—a rugged indifference: the condensed phraseology of its companion we do not often find, but the scholar shines here as of old; the fancies of the old poetic mythologies sport about; Grecian and Roman story are still more frequently called upon for appropriate hints or more extended pictures; while the great contest between the Saviour and Satan goes on,—the glorious eremite, in many an affecting position, appealing to our admiration, our affection, and our love; and Satan as frequently kindling our hatred or our scorn. Innumerable passages of extraordinary beauty might be quoted. The various methods of Satanic enchantment are placed with great art and skill. The table spread before our Saviour, when hungered in the wilderness—the pouring of the hosts of

light-armed troops through the brilliant cities, —the cities of the earth themselves—Athens, the seat of intellectual glory—all are vividly described; while the replies of the Saviour to the panegyrics of the fiend are remarkable for the plainness and the force of their reasoning. One thing must be especially noticed throughout—the language of Satan is never simple, but always rich, highly-coloured, pictorial, and scholarly: the Saviour's in reply, is ever Hebraistic and plain. Let the following be taken as a specimen of the conduct of the various dialogues. "Behold," says Satan,—

"Where on the Ægean shore a city stands,
Built nobly, pure the air and light the soil,
Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits,
And hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades;
See there the olive grove of Academe,
Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long;
There flow'ry hill Hymettus, with the sound
Of bees' industrious murmur, oft invites
To studious musing; there Ilissus rolls
His whisp'ring stream: within the walls then view
The schools of ancient sages; his who bred
Great Alexander, to subdue the world,
Lyceum there, and painted Stoa next:
There shalt thou hear and learn the secret power
Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit,

By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
Æolian charms, and Dorian lyric odes."

"Remove their swelling epithets, thick laid
As varnish on a harlot's cheek, the rest,
Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,
Will far be found unworthy to compare
With Sion's songs, to all true taste excelling,
Where God is praised aright, and godlike men,
The holiest of holies, and his saints;
Such are from God inspired, not such from thee,
Unless where moral virtue is express'd
By the light of Nature, not in all quite lost.
Their orators thou then extoll'st, as those
The top of eloquence, statists indeed,
And lovers of their country, as may seem;
But herein to our prophets far beneath
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government,
In their majestic, unaffected style,
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,—
What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat;
These only with our law best form a king."

The Saviour's night in the wilderness, after the departure of Satan, is a powerful piece of life painting. The winds rushing from their stony caves from the four hinges of the world; the rain mingled with fire, falling on the vexed wilderness; while infernal ghosts, let

loose from their dens, yelling and howling around, hurl their fiery darts.

> "Ill wast thou shrouded then,
> O patient Son of God, yet only stoodst
> Unshaken—
> Sats't unappalled, in calm and sinless peace,
> till Morning fair
> Came forth with pilgrim steps, in amice grey,
> Who with her radiant finger still'd the rear
> Of thunder, chased the clouds, and laid the winds
> And grisly spectres."

The "Paradise Regained" is like some wonderful allegory, which man must read by his life experience. The temptations of the Saviour, it is easy to see, were regarded as the temptations common to us all—those of depraving sensualism, of glory, and of literary and intellectual vanity.

CHAPTER XVII.

MILTON'S ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY.

MILTON did not love bishops; he did not regard episcopacy, as an institution, with love and approbation; he had no friendly feelings toward established religions. Our English Reformation stopped far too short for him; he could not tolerate a sensual religion; and all that he beheld in the episcopacy of his times, tended only to bury the spiritual beneath the superincumbent weight of observances and forms, "attributing purity or impurity to things indifferent, that they might bring the inward acts of the spirit to the outward and customary eye-service of the body, as if they could make God earthly and fleshly, because they could not make themselves heavenly and spiritual. They began to draw down all the divine intercourse betwixt God and the soul; yea, the very shape of God himself, into an exterior and bodily form,

urgently pretending a necessity and obligement of joining the body in a formal reverence, and worship circumscribed. They hallowed it, they fumed it, they sprinkled it, they bedecked it, —not in robes of pure innocence, but of pure linen, with other deformed and fantastic dresses, in palls and mitres, gold and gewgaws, fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe, or the Flamen's vestry. Then was the priest set to con his motions and his postures, his liturgies and his lurries, till the soul, by this means of over-bodying herself, given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wings apace downwards; and, finding the ease she had from her visible and sensuous colleague, the body, in performance of religious duties, her pinions now broken and flagging, shifted off from herself the labour of high soaring any more, forgot her heavenly flight, and left the dull and droiling carcass to plod on in the old road, and drudging trade of outward conformity."*

We shall not attempt to give to our readers anything like a connected analysis of the views of Milton, as developed in his ecclesiastical works. Simply we may say, to him Reformation was not sufficient reform; he desired

* Of the Reformation in England. Book First, p. 1.

to see all rites, and ceremonies, and mummeries, abandoned by the Church, and the Church altogether unfettered from state interference. His religion was a "high philosophy, impregnated with the spirit of the gospel Christianity, — unalloyed, and undefiled by human teaching;" we shall allow our author to speak for himself, for the most part.—He does not undervalue the Reformation.

"When I recall to mind, at last, after so many dark ages, wherein the huge overshadowing train of error, had almost swept all the stars out of the firmament of the church; how the bright and blissful Reformation (by divine power) struck through the black and settled night of ignorance and antichristian tyranny, methinks a sovereign and reviving joy, must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears; and the sweet odour of the returning Gospel, imbathe his soul with the fragrancy of Heaven. Then was the sacred Bible sought out of the dusty corners, where profane falsehood and neglect had thrown it; then schools opened, divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues, the princes and cities trooping apace to the newly erected banner of salvation; the martyrs, with the irresistible might of weakness, shaking the powers

of darkness, and scorning the fiery rage of the old red dragon."

He pronounces a high encomium upon "Wickliffe's preaching, at which all the succeeding reformers more effectually lighted their tapers." How nice is the distinction he draws when speaking of those who hinder the progress of the Reformation; he classes them "into three sorts:—1. Antiquitarians (for so I had rather call them than Antiquarians, whose labours are useful and laudable); 2. Libertines; 3. Politicians;" here are descriptions of bishops;—do our readers know such? —are there any now so fearfully conformed to worldliness of life?

"So that in this manner the prelates, both then and ever since, coming from a mean and plebeian life on a sudden, to be lords of stately palaces, rich furniture, delicious fare, and princely attendance, though the plain and homespun verity of Christ's gospel is unfit any longer to hold their lordship's acquaintance, unless the poor threadbare matron were put into better clothes: her chaste and modest veil, surrounded with celestial beams, they overlaid with wanton tresses, and in a staring tire bespeckled her with all the gaudy allurements of a whore."

Here is the process for transforming a modern into a primitive bishop—

"He that will mould a modern bishop into a primitive, but yield him to be elected by the popular voice, undiocesed, unrevenued, unlarded, and leave him nothing but brotherly equality, matchless temperance, frequent fasting, incessant prayer and preaching, continual watchings and labours in his ministry; which, what a rich booty it would be, what a plump endowment to the many-benefice-gaping mouth of a prelate, what a relish it would give to his canary-sucking and swan-eating palate, let old Bishop Mountain judge for me."

His definition of the Fathers, and summary of the value of Patristic Theology is admirable. "Whatsoever Time," he says, "or the needless hand of blind Chance, has drawn down to this present in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea weed, shells or crabs, unpicked, unchosen—these are the Fathers." And yet once more a passage of strong and biting irony, but not more severe than the times demanded; if the reader shall think so, let him remember the torrents of blood shed by the bishops of those days.

"Let us not be so over credulous, unless God hath blinded us, as to trust our dear souls

into the hands of men that beg so devoutly for the pride and gluttony of their own backs and bellies, that sue and solicit so eagerly, not for the saving of souls, the consideration of which can have no place here at all, but for their bishoprics, deaneries, prebends, and canonries: how can these men not be corrupt, whose very cause is the bribe of their own pleading, whose mouths cannot open without the strong breath and loud stench of avarice, simony, and sacrilege, embezzling the treasury of the church, on painted and gilded walls of temples, wherein God hath testified to have no delight, warming their palace kitchens, and from hence their unctuous and epicurean paunches, with the alms of the blind, the lame, the impotent, the aged, the orphan, the widow? For with these the treasury of Christ ought to be, here must be his jewels disposed, his rich cabinet must be entered here, as the constant martyr, St. Lawrence, taught the Roman Prætors. Sir, would you know what the remonstrance of these men would have, what their petition implies? They intreat us that we would not be weary of those insupportable grievances that our shoulders have hitherto cracked under; they beseech us that we would think them fit to be our justices of the peace, our lords, our

highest officers of state, though they come furnished with no more experience than they learned between the cook and the manciple, or more profoundly at the college audit, or the regent-house, or, to come to their deepest insight, at their patron's table. They would request us to endure still the rustling of their silken cassocks, and that we would burst our midriffs, rather than laugh to see them under sail in all their lawn and sarcenet,—their shrouds and tackle,—with *geometrical rhomboides upon their heads!* They would bear us in hand that we must of duty still appear before them once a year in Jerusalem, like good circumcised males and females, to be taxed by the poll, to be sconced our head-money, our twopences, in their chandlery-shop book of Easter. They pray that it would please us to let them hale us, and worry us with their bandogs and pursuivants; and that it would please the parliament that they may yet have the whipping, fleecing, and flaying of us in *their diabolical courts*; to tear the flesh from our bones, and into our wide wounds, instead of balm, to pour in the oil of tartar, vitriol, and mercury. Surely a right-reasonable, innocent, and soft-hearted petition. O, the relenting bowels of the fathers! Can this be granted

them, unless God have smitten us with frenzy from above, and with a dazzling blindness at noon-day?"

But if Milton writes against bishops, it must not be supposed that he pleads for a lawless church; on the contrary, he contends for discipline.

"He that hath read with judgment of nations and commonwealths, of cities and camps, of peace and war, sea and land, will readily agree that the flourishing and decaying of all civil societies, all the moments and turnings of human occasions, are moved to and fro upon the axle of discipline. So that, whatever power or sway in mortal things weaker men have attributed to fortune, I durst, with some confidence, (the honour of Divine Providence ever saved,) ascribe either to the vigour or the slackness of Discipline. Nor is there any sociable perfection in this life, civil or sacred, that can be above Discipline; but she is that which, with her musical chords, preserves and holds all the parts thereof together. And certainly Discipline is not only the removal of disorder, but, if any visible shape can be given to Divine things, the very visible shape and image of virtue, whereby she is not seen in the regular gestures and motions

of her heavenly paces, as she walks, but also makes the harmony of her voice audible to mortal ears. Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into these celestial princedoms and satrapies, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees, through the great provinces of heaven."

God has given a law for the discipline and governance of his church, and that law is to be found in the New Testament. God has left other governments to the expediencies of time; but, through all periods and changes of the church "God hath reserved the right of church government to himself." Prelacy is not to be tolerated from its seeming harmlessness; what more harmless than the washing of a cup, a custom commanded by long tradition. Yet, the Saviour severely condemned the custom, and declared that the command and service of God were made of none effect, by the tradition. We cannot proceed with his arguments against the interference of the civil power in ecclesiastical causes; or with those on the removal of hirelings from the church. The latter treatise is remarkable for its acuteness, and its learning; it is a noble plea for volun-

taryism in the church. Milton does not plead for an unpaid ministry; he knew in fact that a ministry could not be maintained without being paid; but he protests against improper methods of raising the money for the support of the ministry; and against the excess of payment. It is to be observed in the writings of Milton, he writes against no especial creed, against no views of faith, but against intolerant polity: against the payment for religion by taxation. His argument all along is, that religion is powerful enough to support herself; and genuine religion too holy for state inteference.

After enumerating the deliverances which the Omnipotent Redeemer had wrought as the God of Providence in England's behoof, he breaks out in almost superhuman strains:—

"And now we know, O Thou, our most certain hope and defence! that thine enemies have been consulting all the sorçeries of the great whore, and have joined their plots with that sad intelligencing tyrant that mischiefs the world with his mines of Ophir, and lies thirsting to revenge his naval ruins that have larded our seas; let them all take counsel together, and let it come to nought: let them decree, and do thou cancel it; let Them gather

themselves and be scattered; let them embattle themselves and be broken, for Thou art with us.

"Then amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may, perhaps, be heard offering up high strains in new and lofty measure, to sing and celebrate Thy Divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages; whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her old vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people, at that day, when Thou, the eternal and shortly-expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shall put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming Thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth; where they undoubtedly that, by their labours, counsel, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country shall receive, above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities.

legions, and thrones, into their glorious titles, and in super-eminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in over-measure for ever."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MILTON A REPUBLICAN.

Our readers will by this time have gathered clearly the nature of Milton's politics. He was a Republican; he regarded the people (and not kings and aristocracies;) as the fountain of power, and no doubt this theory is really held by most of the people of England at this day. His "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" unfolds the relative duties of kings and people. Sir Egerton Brydges has a remarkable paragraph upon this, the first of Milton's guinea political books; he says:—

"The very title of this treatise is surely in the highest degree objectionable, and does not in these days require any refutation[?] To say

the truth, this is a part of Milton's character which puzzles me—and no other. *This blood-thirstiness* does not agree with his sanctity, and other mental and moral qualities. I will not say that kings may not be deposed: but Charles I. ought not to have been deposed, much less put to death. In the poet, however, posterity has forgotten the regicide."

The title of book objectionable! So then it seems that despotic baronets will still maintain that kings should rule, and governments exist and exercise power, without inquisition; a very pretty theory truly! But this carries us back to the days of Filmer and Salmasius; they could say but little more; and as to the deposition of kings, if it be objectionable even to enquire into the tenure of their authority, it is not likely that they shall be removed, however unjust may be their reign. All we have learned to know is, that thrones are ever the safest from shock and violence, when standing in the most perfect blaze of inquiry and light.

But Milton saw that a true Republic can only be established by a true people. "For, indeed none can love freedom heartily, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but license, which never hath more scope or more indulgence than under tyrants." And it is because

he feels and fears the goadings of combined ecclesiastical and civil tyranny to crush the awakened thought of the people, that he writes vehemently.

"In times of opposition, when either against new heresies arising, or old corruptions to be reformed, this cool, unpassioned mildness of positive wisdom is not enough to damp and astonish the proud resistance of carnal and false doctors; then (that I may have leave to soar awhile, as the poets' use) Zeal, whose substance is ethereal, arming in complete diamond, ascends his fiery chariot, drawn with two blazing meteors, figured like beasts, but of a higher breed than any the Zodiac yields, resembling two of those four which Ezekiel and St. John saw; the one visaged like a lion, to express power, high authority, and indignation; the other, of countenance like a man, to cast derision and scorn upon perverse and fraudulent seducers; with these, the invincible warrior Zeal, shaking loosely the slack reins, drives over the heads of scarlet prelates, and such as are insolent to maintain traditions, bruising their stiff necks under his flaming wheels."

This is, at least, in better taste, and in a better spirit, than his assailants displayed; one

of whom, a meek and mitred saint, wrote,—"You that love Christ, and know this miscreant wretch, stone him to death, lest you smart for his impunity."

Great is the faith of Milton; he writes in earnestness; his faith dictates to his energy. He believes that the principles, for which he and his compeers contend, will run coeval with the progress of the English nation; and not only so, but will be hailed with rapture by distant nations, shooting the beams of light far down into the remotest recesses, where despotism holds its citadel in darkness.

"Much as I may be surpassed in the powers of eloquence and copiousness of diction by the illustrious orators of antiquity, yet the subject of which I treat was never surpassed, in any age, in dignity or in interest. It has excited such general and such ardent expectation, that I imagine myself not in the forum or on the rostra, surrounded only by the people of Athens or of Rome, but about to address in this, as I did in my former 'Defence,' the whole collective body of people,—cities, states, and councils of the wise and eminent—through the wide expanse of anxious and listening Europe. I seem to survey, as from a towering height, the far-extended tracts of sea and land, and

innumerable crowds of spectators, betraying in their looks the liveliest interest, and sensations the most congenial with my own. Here I behold the stout and manly prowess of the German, disdaining servitude; there, the generous and lively impetuosity of the French; —on this side, the calm and stately valour of the Spaniard; on that, the composed and wary magnanimity of the Italian. Of all the lovers of liberty and virtue, the magnanimous and the wise, in whatever quarter they may be found, some secretly favour, others openly approve; some greet me with congratulations and applause; others, who had long been proof against conviction, at last yield themselves captives to the force of truth. Surrounded by congregated multitudes, I now imagine that, from the Columns of Hercules to the Indian Ocean, I behold the nations of the earth recovering that liberty, which they so long had lost; and that the people of this island are transporting to other countries a plant of more beneficial qualities, and more noble growth, than that which Triptolemus is reported to have carried from region to region; that they are disseminating the blessings of civilization and freedom among cities, kingdoms, and nations. Nor shall I approach *unknown*, *nor*

perhaps unloved; if it be told that I am he who engaged, in single combat, that fierce advocate of despotism, till then reputed invincible in the opinion of many, and in his own conceit, who insolently challenged us and our armies to the battle: but whom, while I repelled his insolence, I silenced with his own weapons; and over whom, if I may trust to the opinions of impartial judges, I gained a complete and glorious victory."

But, reader, you must procure for yourself, and study, the writings of this distinguished political teacher. These expositions of liberty; of civil and religious freedom. They should be read and re-read; the nervous strength of this language will impart strength and majesty to your own; the grand exaltation of these thoughts will add dignity to your conceptions; —and the thickly woven mail of these arguments, will be to the young lover of freedom, as a breastplate from the shafts of the traders in servility, and the lovers of despotism. Let him who would grow in the love and knowledge of true liberty come from the heat and poison of public meetings, and the clap-trap of popular demagogues, to the study of Milton; let him give his days and nights to the pondering of these books: he will not approve all—for even

Milton was human. But it may safely be questioned, whether any other uninspired writer, will impart to him so vast a fund of knowledge, set off in so brilliant a casket?

CHAPTER XIX.

MILTON AND POPERY.

"It is unknown to no man who knows aught of concernment among us, that the increase of popery is, at this day, no small trouble and offence to the greatest part of the nation;" so said Milton in his tract "against the growth of popery." He was placed in the very same dilemma in which some men are placed now. He loved Liberty! He hated Papacy! We suppose his views will not be tolerated in the present day, even by many who hold his general doctrines both in politics and ecclesiastical polity in high estimation; in brief, Milton will not admit a Papist to the same rank of citizenship as a Protestant; he had declared this in his "Defence of the People of England," in reply to Salmasius; and

now that Charles II. and the Duke of York were pursuing their dark and equivocal policy, he had the boldness to sound an alarm to England. His plea against popery was the last work he published: before we notice this, let the reader remark how explicitly he states his views in his "Defence;" and whatever may be the aspect of popery in England, now, there can be no doubt, that in that day in England, the Papists laboured hard to subvert all constitutional authority. Milton loved civil and religious liberty: evidence was not wanting, that the papists in England of that day loved neither; they wound their tortuous way to the corruption of all that could be dear to the English mind.

He thus speaks of the Papists in the preface to his "Defence of the People of England," published in 1651: "You find fault with our magistrates for admitting such 'a common sewer of all sorts of sects.' Why should they not? It belongs to the Church to cast them out of the communion of the faithful, not to the magistrate to banish them the country; provided they do not offend against the civil laws of the state. Men at first united into civil societies, that they might live safely, and enjoy their libety, without being wronged or oppressed;

and according to the doctrines of Christianity, and that they might do so religiously, and they united themselves into churches. Civil societies have laws, and churches have a discipline peculiar to themselves, and far differing from each other. And this has been the occasion of so many wars in Christendom; to wit, because the civil magistrate and the church confounded their jurisdictions. Therefore we do not admit of the Popish Sect, so as to tolerate Papists at all; for we do not look upon that as a religion, but rather as a hierarchical tyranny, under a cloak of religion, clothed with the spoils of the civil power, which it has usurped to itself, contrary to our Saviour's own doctrine."

In the last work to which reference has been made, he groups together all sects of Protestants: and he enquires, how are they to be tolerated? "Doubtless equally," as being "all Protestants; that is, on all occasions giving account of their faith, either by their arguing, preaching in their several assemblies, public writing, and freedom of printing."

"Let us now inquire," he says, "whether popery be tolerated or no. Popery is a double thing to deal with, and claims a two-fold power, ecclesiastical and political, both usurped,

and the one supporting the other. But ecclesiastical has ever pretended to political. The pope, by this mixed faculty, pretends rights to kingdoms and states, and especially to this of England; thrones and unthrones kings, and absolves the people from their obedience to them; sometimes interdicts to whole nations the public worship of God, shutting up their churches: and now, since, through the infinite mercy and favour of God, we have shaken off this Babylonish yoke, hath not ceased by his spies and agents, bulls and emissaries, once to destroy both king and parliament; perpetually to seduce, corrupt, and pervert as many as they can of the people. Whether therefore it be fit or reasonable, to tolerate men thus principled in religion towards the state, I submit it to the consideration of all magistrates, who are best able to provide for their own and the public safety."

Milton does not interfere with the religious tenets of the Romanist, but with his civil opinions. The Romanist holds his reserved dogmas. The Romanist does not submit to the conditions of simple civil society. The Romanist holds the right of a foreign pontiff to interfere in the affairs of state; to make and unmake kings; to throw a foreign state into anarchy;

to support his supremacy; and, therefore, he protests against their elevation to equal civil dignity with the Protestants. In the nineteenth century, the Protestant can afford to be more chivalrous than in Milton's day; but Rome remains as dark, as bloody, and as persecuting as then.

Milton, in fact, was as little tolerant of "Papists" as he was of "prelates;" and for the same reasons—they were both inimical to the existence of perfect civil and religious liberty. But it must not be supposed that he would countenance persecution. "Are we," he asks, "to punish them by corporal punishment, or fines in their estates, upon account of their religion? I suppose it stands not with the clemency of the Gospel, more than what appertains to the security of the state." The means he recommends to "hinder the growth of Popery" are—"the reading of the Scriptures," "mutual forbearance and charity amongst those who profess to take the Bible for their guide," and "the amendment of their lives;"—a process of conviction, to which few, we imagine, will object.

Finally, he says, "Let us, therefore, using this last means, last here spoken of, but first to be done, amend our lives with all *speed*, lest,

through impenitency, we run into that stupidly which we now seek, by all means, warily to avoid,—the worst of superstitions, and the heaviest of all God's judgments, popery."

CHAPTER XX.

PARTING GLIMPSES OF GREAT LIFE.

Of the events of the more private portion of the life of this illustrious man we have scarcely left ourselves room to speak; and indeed the personal narrative mixes itself with the public performance. We may go back and recapitulate a little. When Milton, just turned thirty, returned from his foreign tour, he began to look round him for some occupation in life. He had taken the usual degrees at the University; but his conscience would not allow him to enter upon the pursuits of the Church or the Law. Indeed, from some paragraphs in his life, he appears to have been equally inclined to say, "Woe unto you lawyers!" as, "Woe unto you prelates!" He became, therefore, a schoolmaster; he founded, what Johnson, in a

sneer, calls "his wonder-working academy.— From the testimony of his nephew Phillips, he appears to have attempted, as far as possible, to reduce to practice the plan contained in his letter to Master Hartlib. That nephew speaks affectionately of the diligence of the distinguished teacher, who appears to have succeeded better, in every way, than Johnson, himself a schoolmaster; but, apparently, an impatient, irritable, and unsuccessful one.— The superior genius descended most easily and gracefully to the inferior labour, apparently only desirous to do that one duty well. But politics soon attracted the attention of Milton. He returned to take part in the strife going on in his country between freedom and servility; this was the thought of his whole life. "For me," says he, "I have endeavoured to lay up as the best treasure and solace of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me, the honest liberty of free speech from my youth, where I shall think it available, in so dear a concernment for the Church's good."

The history of Milton's marriage is known to us. It is not necessary here to enumerate the various literary productions of the years of his middle life. On March 15th, 1648, the Council of the nation appointed him Latin

secretary; his salary was £288 per year; but upon his blindness, this salary was reduced to £150., in consequence of his having an assistant—that assistant was Andrew Marvel,—recommended for the office by Milton himself. It is interesting to notice this fact, the introduction of the pure-minded patriot to public service, by his great compatriot. We may now contemplate Milton as Foreign Secretary, frequently in close intercourse with Cromwell,—constantly writing, from his dictation, the letters to foreign princes; and thus, although indirectly, advising, doubtless, in the affairs of England, and of Europe. Sir Egerton Brydges has made some remarks upon Milton, in this office, which betray great ignorance of the real character of the poet.

We have had occasion to speak of Sir Egerton Brydges' imperfect knowledge of Milton's character; but he has not exhibited this ignorance more strikingly in any part of his volume, than in his remarks upon Milton's appointment as secretary to the council.

"Whatever merit Milton might have in the able and learned discharge of his political services," says he, "it is deeply to be lamented that his brilliant and sublime faculties were so employed. He had a mind too creative to be

wasted in writing down official dispatches, or turning them into classical Latin: humble talents would have done better for such laborious and technical tasks. While immured within dark and close official walls, how he must have sighed and pined to be courting his splendid visions of a higher and more congenial world on the banks of some haunted stream! The woods and forests, the mountains, seas, and lakes, ought to have been his dwelling-places. The whispers of the spring, or the roaring of the winter winds, ought to have soothed or excited his spirits. In those regions aërial beings visit the earth; there the soul sees what the concourse of mankind puts to flight; there the mean passions that corrupt the human bosom, have no abode."

All this is very well to those who believe that the poet should seal himself hermetically from the world. We hold no such idea; the poet has duties to his country, and in times of perplexity and alarm, these duties should be of prime importance. Great poets, it has been said, are unfitted for business. We fancy Shakspere must have been a good business man, prompt, sagacious, and attentive. The record goes that the State papers in Milton's department are perfect models of diplomatic

composition. Nay, the reader may look at them for himself; they are models of energy and wisdom. The character of the writer cannot be obscured by the fact of being merely a ministerial organ; we discern in them the perception and the expression of his immortal works. Johnson speaks of his flattery to Cromwell; his panegyric upon him is indeed very noble, one of the finest pieces of his writing. But had Johnson read it attentively, he would have seen faithfulness more predominant than flattery; what Johnson calls flatteries are facts. But what shall we say to this? "You cannot be truly free unless we are free too; for such is the nature of things, that he, who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own, and become a slave." The whole of the paragraph is very faithful, and enhances our idea of the moral courage and consistency of Milton.

On September 3, 1658, the mighty Protector Oliver Cromwell died, and then followed sad confusions; but Milton, although cast down, neither lost heart nor hope. We cannot doubt that one who had mingled so much with the active leaders of parties, and who in his "Lycidas," when quite a young man, had pro-

pheeied the execution of Laud,* saw tolerably clearly the tendency of events ; but he addressed a letter to General Monk, with proposals for establishing a free commonwealth. He was not without some hope that it was not yet too late to save the nation from the horrors anticipated by the Stuarts' return.

But the nation had struggled for selfish ends. Cromwell was the Hannibal of England, and with his death the popular eye turned back again to the wild vanities of the court ; and so Charles returned. How it happened, when Vane and Peters were executed with such barbarity, and Bradshaw's, Ireton's, and Cromwell's bones were torn from their graves with ignominy, that Milton's life was spared, is wonderful ; it is difficult to attribute it to any noble sentiments upon the part of such a king and such a government. The "Paradise Lost" and "Sampson Agonistes" hung, for their performance, upon the thread of a wicked king's whim or will. Certainly Milton deserved to suffer martyrdom for his actions, rather than the peaceful Vane, or the somewhat fanatical Peters, not to mention innumerable less offenders.

* Todd.

He had been for some time blind; malignity attributed his blindness to his writing the reply to Salmasius against the king; it was called a Divine judgment. His eye sight had long been weak, and physicians told him the penalty of writing the book; but it was necessary the book should be written, so he walked right onward, and embraced darkness rather than shrink from his duty. An anecdote records a visit paid him by the Duke of York, who twitted him with this mark of Divine displeasure, for writing against his father. "How angry must God have been with your father," said the poet; "he took my eyes, but he lost his head:" a very proper logic for such reasoners.

His letter to Leonard Phalaris, a celebrated Athenian, who was very desirious that he should consult Thevenot, a celebrated occulist; is very beautiful; it gives a fine idea of the poet's piety and repose of spirit. We have adopted the elegant translation of Mr. Hayley.

"It is about ten years, I think, since I perceived my sight to grow weak and dim, finding at the same time my intestines afflicted with flatulence and oppression.

"Even in the morning, if I began as usual to read, my eyes immediately suffered pain, and seemed to shrink from reading, but, after

some moderate bodily exercise, were refreshed; whenever I looked at a candle I saw a sort of iris around it. Not long afterwards, on the left side of my left eye (which began to fail some years before the other) a darkness arose, that hid from me all things on that side;—if I chanced to close my right eye, whatever was before me seemed diminished.—In the last three years, as my remaining eye failed by degrees some months before my sight was utterly gone, all things that I could discern, though I moved not myself, appeared to fluctuate, now to the right, now to the left. Obstinate vapours seem to have settled all over my forehead and my temples, overwhelming my eyes with a sort of sleepy heaviness, especially after food, till the evening; so that I frequently recollect the condition of the prophet Phineus in the Argonauties:

> ——— 'Him vapours dark
> Envelop'd, and the earth appeared to roll
> Beneath him, sinking in a lifeless trance.'

But I should not omit to say, that while I had some little sight remaining, as soon as I went to bed, and reclined on either side, a copious light used to dart from my closed eyes; then,

as my sight grew daily less, darker colours seemed to burst forth with vehemence, and a kind of internal noise; but now, as if every thing lucid were extinguished, blackness, either absolute or chequered, and interwoven as it were with ash-colour, is accustomed to pour itself on my eyes; yet the darkness perpetually before them, as well during the night as in the day, seems always approaching rather to white than to black, admitting, as the eye rolls, a minute portion of light as through a crevice.

"Though from your physician such a portion of hope also may arise, yet, as under an evil that admits no cure, I regulate and tranquillize my mind, often reflecting, that since the days of darkness allotted to each, as the wise man reminds us, are many, hitherto my darkness, by the singular mercy of God, with the aid of study, leisure, and the kind conversation of my friends, is much less oppressive than the deadly darkness to which he alludes. *For if, as it is written, man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, why should not a man acquiesce even in this? not thinking that he can derive light from his eyes alone, but esteeming himself sufficiently enlightened by the conduct or providence of God.*

"As long therefore, as he looks forward, and provides for me as He does, and leads me backward and forward by the hand as it were through my whole life; shall I not bid my eyes keep holiday, since such appears to be His pleasure? But whatever may be the event of your kindness, my dear Phalavis, with a mind not less resolute and firm, than if it were Lynæus himself, I bid you farewell."

Thus affectingly he reverts to his blindness, upon which his anonymous and scurrilous antagonist had made himself merry:

"Thus it is clear by what motives I was governed in the measures which I took, and the losses which I sustained. Let then the calumniators of the Divine goodness cease to revile, or to make me the object of their superstitious imaginations. Let them consider, that my situation, such as it is, is neither an object of my shame nor my regret, that my resolutions are too firm to be shaken, that I am not depressed by any sense of the Divine displeasure; that on the other hand, in the most momentous periods, I have had full experience of the divine favour and protection; and that, in the solace and the strength which have been infused into me from above, I have been enabled to do the will of God; that I may oftener

think on what he has bestowed, than on what he has withheld; that, in short, I am unwilling to exchange my consciousness of rectitude with that of any other person; and that I feel the recollection and treasured store of tranquillity and delight. But if the choice were necessary, I would, sir, prefer my blindness to yours; yours is a cloud spread over the mind, which darkens both the light of reason and of conscience; mine keeps from my view only the coloured surfaces of things, while it leaves me at liberty to contemplate the beauty and stability of virtue and of truth. How many things are there besides, which I would not willingly see; how many which I must see against my will; and how few which I feel any anxiety to see! There is, as the apostle has remarked, a way to strength through weakness. Let me then be the most feeble creature alive, as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped, the light of the Divine Presence more clearly shines; then, in the proportion as I am weak, I shall be invincibly strong; and in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see. O! that I

may thus be perfected by feebleness, and irradiated by obscurity!"

By darkness and by dangers compressed round, the blind old Monarch of Imagination, Thought, and Scholarship, lived on, traduced and maligned. He yielded not to despondency, still less to despair. Cut off from the world of vision and from active life, he calmly turned to the world within, surprised probably, to find that glorious companionship awaited him there. Milton frequently changed his residences, but nearly all of them lie within a couple of miles' circumference. After the Restoration we find him in Holborn, then in Jewin Street, and last in the Artillery Walk, near Bunhill Fields: there he composed his immortal work, leading a life of the utmost simplicity. It is probable that he was poor then; the apes and butterflies of the season, Wallers, Rochesters, and Cowleys were flaunting in the sunshine of the court. Milton never repined: he knew their worth, if he ever condescended to think of them at all; and he was content to wait until the world should know his. He led a model life, sitting outside his door in the evening, catching the pleasant breeze, saying the cheerful word to the passers by, smoking his pipe, but with his glass of

water before him,—there he might be found until nine o'clock, then he retired. We hear the tones of the organ as the evening chaunt peals solemnly through the house. Rising at four, he indites some portions of his great poem, and studies quietly during the day. Peaceful as this life, so peaceful was his death: he died without a sigh. It is gratifying to know his poverty and obscurity did not prevent a number of distinguished persons from following him to his grave, in the chancel of St. Giles, Cripplegate. To him, beyond almost any man of his time, might be applied the language of the poet—

> "His life was gentle: and the elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

FINIS.

J. S. Pratt, Stokesley, Yorkshire.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PR
3581
H6

Hood, Edwin Paxton
John Milton: the patriot
and the poet